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Old Kensington.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TRUST ME.



HE much-talked-of tea was standing, black as the waters of oblivion, in the teapot when they rejoined Mrs. Palmer. Philippa was sitting tête-à-tête with Raban and seemed chiefly perturbed at having been kept waiting, and because John Morgan had carried off Rhoda.

"I can't think why he did it," said Mrs. Palmer, crossly; "it is much pleasanter all keeping together, and it is too silly of that little Rhoda to make such a disturbance. As if George would have said anything to annoy her with all of us present. Tell me, what did really happen, Robert? Why was I not sent for?"

"I am afraid George was a good deal to blame," said Robert, in a confidential voice. "I only came up after the fracas, but, from what I hear, I am afraid he had been drinking at the bar. Dolly can tell you more than I can, for she was present from the beginning."

Dolly was silent: she could not speak. Frank looked at her and saw

her blush painfully. He was glad that Miss Vanborough should be spared any farther explication, and that Mrs. Palmer beckoned him into a window to tell him that the Admiral had the greatest horror of intemperance, and that she remembered a fearful scene with a kitmutghar who had drained off a bottle of her eau-de-Cologne. "Dear George, unfortunately, was of an excitable disposition. As for the poor Admiral, he is perfectly ungovernable when he is roused," said Mrs. Palmer, in her heroic manner. "I have seen strong men like yourself, Mr. Raban, turn pale before him. I remember a sub-lieutenant trembling like an aspen leaf: he had neglected to call my carriage. Is it not time to be off? Dolly, what have I done with my little blue shawl? You say George is *not* coming?"

"Here is your little blue shawl, mamma," said Dolly, wearily. She was utterly dispirited: she could not understand her mother's indifference, nor Robert's even flow of conversation: she forgot that they did not either of them realize how serious matters had been.

"It is really too naughty of George," was all that Mrs. Palmer said; "and, now that I think of it, he certainly told me he might have to go back to Cambridge to-night, so we may not see him again. Mr. Raban, if you see him, tell him—— But, I forgot," with a gracious smile, "we meet you to-morrow at the Middletons'. Robert tells me my brother and his family are come to town this week. It will be but a painful meeting I fear. Dolly, remind me to call there in the morning. They have taken a house in Dean's Yard, of all places. And there is Madame Frisette at nine. How tiresome those dressmakers are."

"Is Madame Frisette at work for Dorothea?" asked Robert, with some interest.

Dolly did not reply, nor did she seem to care whether Madame Frisette was at work or not. She sat leaning back in her corner with two hands lying listless in her lap, pale through the twilight. Frank Raban, as he looked at her, seemed to know, almost as if she had told him in words, what was passing in her mind. His jealous intuition made him understand it all; he knew too, as well as if Robert had spoken, something of what he was *not* feeling. They went rolling on through the dusk, between villas and dim hedges and nursery-gardens, beyond which the evening shadows were passing; and all along the way it seemed to Dolly that she could hear George's despairing voice ringing beyond the mist, and, haunted by this echo, she could scarcely listen with any patience to her companion's ripple of small talk, to Mrs. Palmer's anecdotes of Captains and Colonels and anticipation of coming gaiety and emotions. What a season was before her! The Admiral's return, Dolly's marriage, Lady Henley's wearing insinuations—she dreaded to think of it all.

"You must call for us to-morrow at half-past seven, Robert, and take us to the Middletons'. I couldn't walk into the room alone with Dolly. I suppose Joanna, too, will be giving some at-homes. I shall have to go, however little inclined I may feel."

"It is always well to do what other people do," said Robert; "it answers much best in the long run."

He did not see Dolly's wondering look. Was this the life Dolly had dreamt of? a sort of wheel of commonplace to which poor unquiet souls were to be bound, confined by platitudes, and innumerable threads, and restrictions, and silences. She had sometimes dreamt of something more meaningful and truer, something responding to her own nature, a life coming straighter from the heart. She had not counted much on happiness. Perhaps she had been too happy to wish for happiness; but to-night it occurred to her again what life might be—a life with a truth in it and a genuine response and a nobler scheme than any she had hitherto realized.

Frank heard a sigh coming from her corner. They were approaching the street where he wanted to be set down, and he, too, had something in his mind, which he felt he must say before they parted. As he wished Dorothea good-night he found a moment to say, in a low voice, "I hope you may be able to tell Lady Sarah everything that has happened, without reserve. Do trust me. It will be best for all your sakes;" and then he was gone before Dolly could answer.

"What did he say?" said Robert Henley. "Are you warm enough, Dolly? Will you have a shawl?"

He spoke so affectionately that she began to wonder whether it was because they were not alone that he had been cold and disappointing.

They reached the house, and old Sam came to the door, and Robert helped to unpack the wrecks of the day's pleasures—the hampers, and umbrellas, and armfuls of crumpled muslins. Then the opportunity came for Robert to be impulsive if he chose, for Mrs. Palmer floated upstairs with her candle to say good-night to Lady Sarah. She was kissing her hand over the banisters, and dropping all the wax as she went along.

Robert came up to Dolly, who was standing in the hall. "Good-night," he said. "It might have been a pleasant day upon the whole if it had not been for George. You must get him to apologize to Rhoda, Dora. I mean to speak very plainly to him when I see him next."

His calmness exasperated her as he stood there with his handsome face looking down a little reproachfully at her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"Speaking won't do a bit of good, Robert," she said, hastily. "Pray don't say much to him——"

"I wonder when you will learn to trust me, Dora," said her cousin taking her hand. "How shall we ever get on unless you do?"

"I am sure I don't know," Dolly answered, wearily; "we don't seem to want the same things, Robert, or to be going together a bit."

"What do you mean?" said Henley. "You are tired and out of spirits to-night."

With a sudden reaction Dolly caught hold of his arm with both hands. "Robert! Robert! Robert!" she said, holding him fast and

looking as if she could transform him with her eyes to be what she wanted.

"Silly child," he answered, "I don't think you yourself know what you want. Good-night. Don't forget to be ready in time to-morrow."

Then he was gone, having first looked for his umbrella, and the door banged upon Robert and the misty stars, and Dolly remained standing at the foot of the stairs. Frank Raban's words had borne fruit as sensible words should do. "Trust me," he had said; and Henley had used the same phrase, only with Robert "Trust me" meant believe that I cannot be mistaken; with Frank, "Trust me" meant trust in truth in yourself and in others. Dolly, with one of those quick impulses which come to impressionable people, suddenly felt that he was right. All along she had been mistaken. It would have been better, far better, from the beginning to have told Lady Sarah everything. She had been blinded, over-persuaded. Marker came up to shut bolts and put out the lights. Dolly looked up, and she went and laid her tired head on the old nurse's shoulder, and clung to her for an instant.

"Is anything the matter, my dearie?" said Marker.

"Nothing new," Dolly said. "Marker, George is not come home. I have so much to say to him! Don't bolt the door, and please leave a light."

But George did not come home that night, although the door was left unbolted and the light kept burning on purpose. When the morning came his bed was folded smooth, and everything looked straight and silent in his room, which was orderly as places are when the people are away who inhabit them.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### CIRCUMSTANCE.

FOR some days before the picnic Mrs. Palmer and Julie had been absorbed in the preparation of two beautiful garments that were to be worn at Mrs. Middleton's dinner, and at a ball at Bucklersbury House, for which Mrs. Palmer was expecting an invitation. Lady Sarah had written at her request to ask for one. Meanwhile the dresses had been growing under Julie's art; throwing out fresh flounces, and trimmings, and ribbons, hour by hour, until they had finally come to perfection, and were now lying side by side on the bed in the spare room, ready to be tried on for the last time.

"Must it be *now*, mamma?" said Dolly. "Breakfast is just ready, and Aunt Sarah will be waiting."

"Julie, go downstairs and beg Lady Sarah not to wait," said Mrs. Palmer, with great decision.

Julie came back saying that Miss Rhoda was with Lady Sarah below, and asking for Miss Dolly.

"Presently," said Mrs. Palmer. "Very pretty, indeed, Julie!"



Then she suddenly exclaimed, "You cannot imagine what it is, Dolly, to be linked to one so utterly uncongenial, you who are so fortunate in our dear Robert's perfect sympathy and knowledge of London life. He quite agrees with me in my wish that you should be introduced. Admiral Palmer hates society, except to preach at it—such a pity, is it not! I assure you, strange as it may seem, I quite dread his return."

Dolly stood bolt upright, scarcely conscious of the dress or the pins, or her mother's monologue. She was still thinking over the great determination she had come to. George had not come back, but Dolly had made up her mind to tell Lady Sarah everything. She was not afraid; it was a relief to have the matter settled. She would say no word to injure him. It was she who had been to blame throughout. Her reflections were oddly intermingled with snips and pricks other than those of her conscience. Once, as Julie ran a pin into her arm, she thought how strange it was that Mr. Raban should have guessed everything all along. Dolly longed and feared to have her explanation over.

"Have you nearly done? Let me go down, Julie," said Dolly, becoming impatient at last.

But Julie still wanted to do something to the set of the sleeve.

And while Julie was pinning poor Dolly down, the clock struck nine, and the time was over, and Dolly's opportunity was lost for ever. It has happened to us all. When she opened the dining-room door at last she knew in one instant that it was too late.

The room seemed full of people. Lady Sarah was there; Mrs. Morgan bristling by the window; Rhoda was there, kneeling at Lady Sarah's knee, in some agitation: her bonnet had fallen off, her hair was all curling and rough. She started up as Dolly came in, and ran to meet her.

"Oh! Dolly," she said, "come, come," and she seized both her hands. "I have told Lady Sarah everything; she knows all. Oh! why did we not confide in her long ago?" and Rhoda burst into tears. "Oh, I feel how wrong we have been," she sobbed.

"Rhoda has told me everything, Dolly," said Lady Sarah in a cold voice—"everything that those whom I trusted implicitly saw fit to conceal from me."

Was it Aunt Sarah who had spoken in that cold harsh-sounding tone?

"Rhoda has acted by my advice, and with my full approval," said Mrs. Morgan, stepping forward. "She is not one to look back once her hand is to the plough. When I had seen George's letter—it was lying on the table—I said at once that no time should be lost in acquainting your aunt, Dolly. It is inconceivable to me that you have not done so before. We started immediately after our eight-o'clock breakfast, and all is now clearly understood, I trust, Lady Sarah; Rhoda's frankness will be a lesson to Dolly."

Poor Dolly! she was stiff, silent, overwhelmed. She looked appealingly

at her aunt, but Lady Sarah looked away. What could she say? how was it that she was there a culprit while Rhoda stood weeping and forgiven? Rhoda who had enforced the silence, Rhoda now taking merit for her tardy frankness! while George was gone; and Dolly in disgrace.

"Indeed, Aunt Sarah, I would have told you everything," cried the girl, very much agitated, "only Rhoda herself made me promise——"

"Dolly! you never promised," cried Rhoda. "But we were all wrong," she burst out with fresh penitence; "only, Lady Sarah knows all, and we shall be happier now," she said, wiping her eyes.

"Happy in right-doing," interrupted Mrs. Morgan.

"Have we done wrong, Aunt Sarah? Forgive us," said Dolly, with a touching ring in her voice.

Lady Sarah did not answer. She was used to her nephew's misdeeds, but that Dolly—her own Dolly—should have been the one to plot against her cut the poor lady to the heart. She could not speak. "And Dolly knew it all the time," she had said to Rhoda a minute before Dolly came in. "Yes, she knew it," said Rhoda. "She wished it, and feared——" Here Rhoda blushed very red. "George told me she feared that you might not approve and do for him as you might otherwise have done. Oh! Lady Sarah, what injustice we have done you!"

"Perhaps Dolly wish to see the letter," said Mrs. Morgan, offering her a paper; there was no mistaking the cramped writing. There was no date nor beginning to the note:—

I have been awake all night thinking over what has happened. It is not your fault that you do not know what love is, nor what a treasure I have wasted upon you. I have given you my best, and to you it is worthless. You can't realize such love as mine. You will not even understand the words that I am writing to you; but it is not your fault, any more than it is mine, that I cannot help loving you. Oh, Rhoda, you don't care so much for my whole life's salvation as I do for one moment's peace of mind for you. I see it now—I understand all now. Forgive me if I am hurting you, for the sake of all you have made me suffer. I feel as if I could no longer bear my life here. I must go, and yet I must see you once more. You need not be afraid that I should say anything to frighten or distress you. Your terror of me has pained me far more than you have any conception of. God bless you. I had rather your hands smote me than that another blessed.

"It is most deplorable that a young man of George's ability should write such nonsense," said Mrs. Morgan.

Poor Dolly flushed up and began to tremble. Her heart ached for her poor George's trouble.

"It is not nonsense," she said, passionately; "people call what they cannot feel themselves nonsense. Aunt Sarah, you understand, though they don't. You must see how unhappy he is. How can Rhoda turn against him now? How can she after all that has passed? What harm has he done? It was not wicked to love her more than she loved him."

"Do you see no cruelty in all this long deception?" said Lady Sarah, with two red spots burning in her cheeks. "You must both have had

some motive for your silence. Have I ever shown myself cold or unfeeling to you?" and the flushed face was turned away from her.

"It was not for herself, Lady Sarah," said Mrs. Morgan, wishing to see justice done. "No doubt she did not wish to injure George's prospects."

Dolly was silent. She had some dim feeling of what was in Lady Sarah's mind; but it was a thought she put aside—it seemed unworthy of them both. She was ashamed to put words to it.

If Dolly and her aunt had only been alone all might have been well, and the girl might have made Lady Sarah understand how true she had been to her and loyal at heart, although silent from circumstances. Dolly looked up with wistful speaking eyes, and Lady Sarah almost understood their mute entreaty.

The words of love are all but spoken when some one else speaks other words; the hands long to grasp each other, and other fingers force them asunder. Alas! Rhoda stood weeping between them, and Mrs. Palmer now appeared in an elegant morning wrapper.

"My dearest child, Madame Frisette is come and is waiting," said Dolly's mamma, sinking into a chair. "She is a delightful person, but utterly reckless for trimmings."

"How do you do, Mrs. Morgan; why do you not persuade Lady Sarah to let Madame Frisette take her pattern, and——?"

But, as usual, Lady Sarah, freezing under Mrs. Palmer's sunny influence, got up and left the room.

Rhoda, tearful and forgiven, remained for some time giving her version of things to Mrs. Palmer. She had come to speak to Lady Sarah by her aunt's advice. Aunt Morgan had opened George's letter as it lay upon the breakfast-table, and had been as much surprised as Rhoda herself by its contents. They had come to talk things over with Lady Sarah, to tell her of all that had been making Rhoda so unhappy of late.

"I thought she and you, Mrs. Palmer, would have advised me and told me what was right to do," said the girl, with dark eyes brimming over. "How can I help it if he loves me? I know that he might have looked higher."

"The boy is perfectly demented," said Mrs. Palmer, "to dream of marrying. He has not a sixpence, my dear child—barely enough to pay his cab-hire. He has been most ridiculous. How we shall ever persuade Lady Sarah to pay his debts I cannot imagine! Dolly will not own to it, but we all know that she does not like parting with her money. I do hope and trust she has made her will, for she looks a perfect wreck."

"Oh, mamma!" entreated poor Dolly.

Mrs. Palmer paid no heed, except to say crossly, "I do wish you had shown a little common sense. Dolly, you have utterly injured your

prospects. Robert will be greatly annoyed; he counts so much upon dear Sarah's affection for you both. As for me, I have been disappointed far too often to count upon anything. By the way, Dolly, I wish you would go up and ask your aunt whether that invitation has come to Bucklersbury House. Go, child; why do you look so vacant?"

Poor Dolly! One by one all those she trusted most seemed to be failing and disappointing her. Hitherto Dolly had idealized them all. She shrunk to learn that love and faith must overcome evil with good, and that this is their reward even in this life, and that to love those who love you is not the whole of its experience.

Rhoda's letter, miserable as it was, had relieved Dolly from much of her present anxiety about George. That hateful dark river no longer haunted her. He was unhappy, but he was safe on shore. All the same, everything seemed dull, and sad, and undefined that afternoon, and Robert coming in, found her sitting in the oak-room window with her head resting on her hand and her work lying in her lap. She had taken up some work, but as she set the stitches, it seemed to her,—it was but a fancy—that with each stitch George was going farther and farther away, and she dropped her work at last into her lap, and reasoned herself into some composure; only when her lover came in cheerfully and talking with the utmost ease and fluency, her courage failed her suddenly.

"What is the matter; why do you look so unhappy?" said Robert.

"Nothing is the matter," said Dolly, "only most things seem going wrong, Robert; and I have been wrong, and there is nothing to be done."

"What is the use of making yourself miserable?" said Robert, good-naturedly scolding her; "you are a great deal too apt, Dolly, to trouble yourself unnecessarily. You must forgive me for saying so. This business between George and Rhoda is simply childish, and there is nothing in it to distress you."

"Do you think that nothing is unhappiness," said Dolly, going on with her own thought, "unless it has a name and a definite shape?"

"I really don't know," said Henley. "It depends upon . . . What is this invitation, Dora? You don't mean to say the Duchess has not sent one yet?" he said in a much more interested voice.

"There is only the card for Aunt Sarah. I am afraid mamma is vexed, and it is settled that I am not to go."

"Not to go?" Robert cried; "my dear Dolly, of course you must go; it is absolutely necessary you should be seen at one or two good houses, after all the second-rate society you have been frequenting lately. Where is your mother?"

When Mrs. Palmer came in, in her bonnet, languid and evidently out of temper, and attended by Colonel Witherington, Robert immediately asked, in a heightened tone of voice, whether it was true that Dolly was not to be allowed to go to the ball.

Philippa replied in her gentlest accents that no girl should be seen without her mother. If an invitation came for them both, everything was

ready; and, even at the last moment, she should be willing to take Dorothea to Bucklersbury House.

"Too bad," said the Colonel, sitting heavily down in Lady Sarah's chair. "A conspiracy, depend upon it. They don't wish for too much counter-attraction in a certain quarter."

"One never knows what to think," said Mrs. Palmer, thoughtfully; "I have left a card this afternoon, Robert, upon which I wrote a few words in pencil, to explain my connection with Sarah. I wished to show that I at least was not unacquainted with the usages of civilized society. Kindly hand me that *Peerage*."

"My dear Aunt Philippa," cried Robert, walking up and down in a state of the greatest perturbation, "what induced you to do such a preposterous thing? What will the Duchess think of us all?"

Mrs. Palmer, greatly offended, replied that she could not allow Robert to speak to her in such disrespectful tones. The Duchess might think what she chose; Dolly should not go without her.

Dolly tried in vain to smooth the angry waters—she only made things worse.

"I don't care about it a bit," she said.

"After all the trouble you have given us in the matter," said her mother, "it is scarcely gracious of you, Dolly, to say that you no longer care for the ball."

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#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

##### WHITE ROSES.

SOME one sent Dolly a great bunch of white roses that afternoon; they came in with a late breath of summer—shining white with dark leaves and stems—and, as Dolly bent her head over the soft zones, breathing their sweet breath, it seemed to carry her away into cool depths of fragrance. The roses seemed to come straight from some summer garden, from some tranquil place where all was peace and silence. As she stood, holding them in her two hands, the old garden at All Saints came before her, and the day when Robert first told her that he loved her. How different things seemed already, the roses only were as sweet as she remembered them. Every one seemed changed since then—Robert himself most of all; and if she was herself disappointed, was she not as changed as the rest?

But these kind, dear roses had come to cheer her, and to remind her to be herself, of all that had gone before. How good of Robert to think of them! She wished they had come before he left, that she might have thanked him. She now remembered telling him, as they were driving down to the river, that no roses were left in their garden.

"Very pretty," said her mother. "Take them away, Dolly; they are quite overpowering. You know, Colonel Witherington, how much

better people understand these things at Trincomalee : and what quantities of flowers I used to receive there. Even the Admiral once ordered in six dozen lemon-shrubs in tubs for my fête. As for the people in this country, they don't do things by halves, but by quarters, my dear Colonel."

Mrs. Palmer was still agitated, nor did she regain her usual serenity until about six o'clock, when, in answer to a second note from Lady Sarah, the persecuted Duchess sent a blank card for Mrs. Palmer to fill up herself if she chose.

When Dolly came to say good-night to Lady Sarah she held her roses in her hand : some of the leaves shook down upon her full white skirts ; it was late in the summer, and the sweet heads hung languid on their stalks. They were the last roses that Dolly wore for many and many a day.

"So you are going," said Lady Sarah.

"Yes," said Dolly, waiting for one word, one sign to show that she was forgiven : she stood with sun-gilt hair in the light of the western window.

"Dear Aunt Sarah, you are not well. You must not be left all alone," Dolly said, timidly.

"I am quite well—I shall not be alone," said Lady Sarah. "Mr. Tapeall is coming, and I am going to sign my will, Dolly," and she looked her niece hard in the face. "I shall not change it again whatever may happen. You will have no need in future to conceal anything from me, for the money is yours." And Lady Sarah sighed, deeply hurt.

Dolly blushed up. "Dear Aunt Sarah, I do not want your money," she said. "You could never have thought——"

"I can only judge people by their deeds," said Lady Sarah, coldly still. "You and George shall judge me by mine, whether or not I have loved you ;" and the poor old voice failed a little, and the lips quivered as she held up her cheek for Dolly to kiss.

"Dear, dearest," said Dolly, "only forgive me too. If you mean that you are going to leave me money, I shall not be grateful. I have enough. What do I want? Only that you should love us always. Do you think I would marry Robert if he did not think so too?"

"Mademoiselle ! Madame is ready," cried Julie, coming to the door, and tapping.

"George, too, would say the same, you know he would," Dolly went on, unheeding Julie's call. "But if you give him what you meant for me, dear Aunt Sarah ; indeed that would make me happiest, and then I should know you forgive me."

The door creaked, opened, and Mrs. Palmer stood there impatient in her evening dress.

"My dear Dolly, what have you got to say to Aunt Sarah ? We shall be dreadfully late, and Robert is fuming. Do pray come. Good-night, Sarah—so sorry to leave you."

Rather than keep dinner waiting people break off their talk, their

loves, their prayers. The Middletons' dinner was waiting, and Dolly had to come away. Some of the rose-leaves were lying on the floor after she had left, and the caressing fragrance still seemed to linger in the room.

Dolly left home unforgiven, so she thought. Aunt Sarah had not smiled nor spoken to her in her old voice once since that wretched morning scene.

But, in truth, Lady Sarah was clearer-sighted than people gave her credit for; she was bitterly hurt by Dolly's want of confidence, but she began to understand the struggle which had been going on in the girl's mind, and so far, things were not so sad as she had imagined at first. They were dismal enough.

When Marker came to tell Lady Sarah that Mr. Tapeall and his clerks were below, she got up from her chair wearily, and went down to meet the lawyer. What did she care now? She had saved, and pinched, and laid by (more of late than any one suspected), and Dolly was to benefit, and Dolly did not care, Robert only seemed to count upon the money. It is often the most cautious people who betray themselves most unexpectedly. Something in Henley's manner had annoyed Lady Sarah of late. He had spoken of George with constant disparagement. More than once Robert had let slip a word that showed how confidently he looked for Dolly's inheritance.

One day Mrs. Palmer had noticed Lady Sarah's eyes upon him, and immediately tried to cover his mistake. Not so Dolly, who said, "Robert! what are you thinking of? How should we ever be able to afford a country-house if you go into Parliament?"

"Robert thinks he is marrying an heiress, I suppose," said Lady Sarah.

"No," he doesn't," Dolly answered; "that would spoil it all."

This was all the gratitude poor Lady Sarah had saved and pinched herself to win.

Lady Sarah, as I have said, might have been a money-lover, if her warm heart had not saved her. But she was human, and she could not help guessing at Robert's comfortable calculations, and she resented them. Did she not know what it was to be married, not for herself, but for what she could bring. Was *that* to be her Dolly's fate? Never, never! Who knows? Let her have her own way; it may be best after all, thought Lady Sarah, wearily. She was tired of battling. Let George inherit, if it so pleased them. To please them was all she had wished or hoped for, and now even the satisfaction of pleasing them in her own way was denied her. But her girl was true; this she felt. No sordid thoughts had ever come between them, and for this she thanked God in her heart.

"You may burn it, Mr. Tapeall," said Lady Sarah, as the lawyer produced a beautiful neatly-written parchment, where Miss Dorothea Vanborough's name was emblazoned many times. "I want you to make



me another. Yes, make it directly, and I will sign it at once, and old Sam can bear witness."

"I shall be happy to receive any further instructions," said the lawyer; "I shall have to take the memorandum home with me to prepare——"

"I will sign the memorandum," said Lady Sarah. "You can have it copied, if you like, Mr. Tapeall; but I wish to have this business settled at once, and to hear no more of it. There is a pen and some ink on that table."

"Where did you get your roses?" said Robert to Dolly; "I thought you told me they were over."

"Did not you send them?" said Dolly, disappointed. "Who can have sent them? Not Colonel Witherington?"

"Mr. Raban is more likely," said Mrs. Palmer. "Julie tells me he came to the door this afternoon."

"How kind of him," cried Miss Vanborough.

"It was quite unnecessary," said Robert. "Nobody, in society, carries bouquets now."

"Then I am not in society," said Dolly, laughing; but although she laughed, she felt sad and depressed.

When the door opened and Mrs. Palmer, followed by her beautiful daughter and Henley, came into the room at Mrs. Middleton's, Colonel Witherington declared, upon his honour, they quite brightened up the party. White and gracious with many laces and twinklings, Mrs. Palmer advances, taking to society as a duck takes to the water, and not a little pleased with the sensation she is creating. Dolly follows, looking very handsome, but, it must be confessed, somewhat absent. Her mother had excellent taste, and had devised a most becoming costume, and if Dolly had only been herself she would certainly have done credit to it; but she had not responded to Mademoiselle Julie's efforts—a sudden fit of dull shyness seemed to overpower her. If Frank Raban had been there, she would have liked to thank him for her flowers, but Mrs. Middleton began explaining to Robert how sorry she was that his friend Mr. Raban had been obliged to go off to Cambridge. Dolly was a little disappointed. The silvery folds of her dress fell each in juxtaposition, but Dolly sat silent and pale and far away, and for some time she scarcely spoke.

"That girl does not look happy," said some one.

Robert overheard the speech, and was very much annoyed by it. These constant depressions were becoming a serious annoyance to him. He took Dolly down to dinner, but he devoted himself to a sprightly lady on his left hand, who with many shrieks of laughter and wriggings and twinklings of diamonds spurred him on to a brilliance foreign to his nature. Young as he was, Robert was old for his age, and a capital diner-out, and he had the art of accommodating himself to his audience. Mrs. Palmer was radiant sitting between two white neckcloths; one belonged to the

Viscount Porteuillis, the other to the faithful Witherington; and she managed to talk to them both at once.

Dolly's right-hand neighbour was an upright, rather stern, soldierly-looking man, with a heavy white moustache. He spoke to her, and she answered with an effort, for her thoughts were still far away, and she was preoccupied still. Dolly was haunted by the sense of coming evil; she was pained by Robert's manner. He was still displeased, and he took care to show that it was so. She was troubled about George; she was wondering what he was about. She had written to him at Cambridge that afternoon a loving, tender, sisterly little letter, begging him to write to his faithful sister Dolly. Again she told herself that it was absurd to be anxious, and wicked to be cross, and she tried to shake off her depression, and to speak to the courteous though rather alarming neighbour on her right hand.

It was a dinner-party just like any other. They are pretty festivals on the whole, although we affect to deery them. In the midst of the Middleton dinner-table was an erection of ice and ferns and cool green grass, and round about this circled the entertainment—flowers, dried fruit, processions of cut glass and china, with entrées, diversities of chicken and cutlet, and then ladies and gentlemen alternate, with a host at one end and a hostess at the other, and an outermost ring of attendants, pouring out gold and crimson juices into the crystal cups.

It is fortunate, perhaps, that other people are not silent always because we are sad. With all its objections—I have read this in some other book—there is a bracing atmosphere in society, a Spartan-like determination to leave cares at home, and to try to forget all the ills and woes and rubs to which we are subject, and to think only of the present and the neighbours fate has assigned for the time. Little by little, Dolly felt happier and more reassured. Where everything was so commonplace and unquestioning, it seemed as if tragedy could not exist. Comedy seems much more real at times than tragedy. Three or four tragedies befall us in the course of our existence, and a hundred daily comedies pass before our eyes.

Dolly, hearing her mother's silver laugh and Robert's cheerful duet, was reassured, and she entered little by little into the tune of the hour, and once, glancing up shyly, she caught a very kind look in her neighbour's keen dark eyes.

He knew nothing of her, except a sweet girlish voice and a blush; but that was enough almost, for it was Dolly's good fortune to have a voice and a face that told of her as she was. There are some smiles and blushes that mean nothing at all, neither happy emotion nor quick response; and, again, are there not other well-loved faces which are but the homely disguises in which angels have come into our tents? Dolly's looks pleased her neighbour, nor was he disappointed when he came to talk to her; he felt a kindness towards the girl, and a real interest when he discovered her name. He had known her father in India many years before. "Had

she ever heard of David Fane?" Colonel Fane seemed pleased when Dolly brightened up and exclaimed. He went on to tell her that he was on his way to the Crimea: his regiment was at Southampton, waiting its orders to sail.

"And you are going to that dreadful war!" said Dolly, in her girlish tones, after a few minutes' talk.

Colonel Fane looked very grave.

"Your father was a brave soldier," he said; "he would have told you that war is a cruel thing; but there are worse things than fighting for a good cause."

"You mean *not* fighting," said Dolly; "but how can we who sit at home in peace and safety be brave for others?"

"I have never yet known a woman desert her post in the time of danger," said Colonel Fane, speaking with gentle, old-fashioned courtesy. "You have your own perils to affront: they find you out even in your homes. I saw a regiment of soldiers to-day," he said, smiling, "in white caps and aprons, who fight with some very deadly enemies. They are under the command of my sister, my brother's widow. She is a hospital-nurse, and has charge of a fever-ward at present."

Then he went on to tell Dolly that his brother had died of small-pox not long before, and his wife had mourned him, not in sackcloth and ashes, but in pity and love and devotion to others. Dolly listened with an unconscious look of sympathy that touched Colonel Fane more than words.

"And is she quite alone now?" said Dolly.

"I should like you to know her some day," he said. "She is less alone than anybody I know. She lives near St. Barnabas' Hospital; and if you will go and see her some time when she is at home and away from her sick, she will make, not acquaintance, but friends with you, I hope."

Then he asked Dolly whether she was an only child, and the girl told him something—far more than she had any idea of—about George.

"I might have been able to be of some little use to your brother if he had chosen the army for a profession," said Colonel Fane, guessing that something was amiss.

Dolly was surprised to find herself talking to Colonel Fane, as if she had known him all her life. A few minutes before he had been but a name. When he offered to help George, Dolly blushed up, and raised two grateful eyes.

There is something in life which is not love, but which plays as great a part almost—sympathy, quick response—I scarcely know what name to give it; at any moment, in the hour of need perhaps, a door opens, and some one comes into the room. It may be a common-place man in a shabby coat, a placid lady in a smart bonnet; does nothing tell us that this is one of the friends to be, whose hands are to help us over the stony places, whose kindly voices will sound to us hereafter voices out of the infinite. Life has, indeed, many phases, love has many a metempsychosis.

Is it a lost love we are mourning—a lost hope? Only dim, distant stars, we say, where all was light. Lo, friendship comes dawning in generous and peaceful streams!

Before dinner was over, Colonel Fane said to Dolly, "I hope to have another talk with you some day. I am not coming upstairs now; but, if you will let me do so, I shall ask my sister, Mrs. William Fane, to write to you when she is free."

Robert was pleased to see Dolly getting on so well with her neighbour. He was a man of some mark, and a most desirable acquaintance for her. Robert was just going to introduce himself, when Mrs. Middleton bowed to Lady Porteuillis, and the ladies began to leave the room.

"Good-by," said Dolly's new friend, very kindly; "I shall ask you not to forget your father's old companion. If I come back, one of my first visits shall be to you."

Then Dolly stood up blushing, and then she said, "Thank you, very much; I shall never forget you. I, too, am going away—to India—with——" and she looked at Henley, who was at that moment receiving the parting fire of the lively lady. There was no time to say more; she put out her hand with a grateful pressure. Colonel Fane watched Dolly as she walked away in the procession. For her sake he said a few civil words to Henley; but he was disappointed in him. "I don't think poor Stan Vanborough would have approved of such a cut-and-dry son-in-law," the Colonel said to himself as he lighted his cigar and came away into the open street.

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#### CHAPTER XXXV.

#### "ONLY GEORGE."

THOUGHTS seem occasionally to have a life of their own—a life independent; sometimes they are even stronger than the thinkers, and draw them relentlessly along. They seize hold of outward circumstances with their strong grip. How strangely a dominant thought sometimes runs through a whole epoch of life!

With some holy and serene natures, this thought is peace in life; with others, it is human love, that troubled love of God.

The moonlight is streaming over London; and George is not very far away, driven by his master thought along a bright stream that flows through the gates and by the down-trodden roads that cross Hyde Park. The skies, the streets, are silver and purple; abbey-towers and far-away houses rise dim against the stars; lights burn in shadowy windows. The people passing by, and even George, hurrying along in his many perplexities, feel the life and the echo everywhere of some mystical chord of nature and human nature striking in response. The very iron rails along the paths seemed turned to silver. George leaps

over a silver railing, and goes towards a great sea of moonlight lying among the grass and encircled by shadowy trees.

In this same moonlit stream, flowing into the little drawing-room of the bow-windowed house in Old Street, sits Rhoda, resting her head against the pane of the lantern-like window, and thinking over the events of the last two days.

On the whole, she feels that she has acted wisely and for the best. Lady Sarah seemed to think so—Uncle John said no word of blame. It was unfortunate that Aunt Morgan's curiosity should have made her insist upon reading George's letter; but no harm had come of it. Dolly, of course, was unreasonable. Rhoda, who was accustomed to think of things very definitely, begun to wonder what Frank Raban would think of it all, and whether Uncle John would tell him. She thought that Mr. Raban would not be sorry to hear of what had occurred. What a pity George was not more like Mr. Raban or Robert Henley. How calm they were; while he—he was unbearable; and she was very glad it was all over between them. Lady Sarah was evidently deeply offended with him.

"I hope she will leave him *something*," thought Rhoda. "He will never be able to make his way. I can see that; and he is so rough, and I am such a poor little thing," and Rhoda sighed. "I shall always feel to him as if he were a brother, and I shall tell Mr. Raban so if——"

Here Rhoda looked up, and almost screamed out, for there stood George, rippling with moonlight, watching her through the window from the opposite side of the street. He looked like a ghost as he leant against the railings. He did not care who noticed him, nor what other people might think of him. He had come all this way only to see Rhoda once more, and there she was, only separated from him by a pane of glass.

When Rhoda looked up, George came across and stood under the window. The moonlight stream showed him a silver figure plain marked upon the darkness. There she sat with a drooping head and one arm lightly resting against the bar. Poor boy! He had started in some strange faith that he should find her. He had come up all the way only to look at her once more. All his passionate anger had already died away. He had given up hope, but he had not given up love; and so he stood there wild and haggard, with pulses throbbing. He had scarcely eaten anything since the evening before. He had gone back to Cambridge he knew not why. He had lain awake all night, and all day he had been lying in his boat hiding under the trees along the bank, looking up at the sky and cursing his fate.

Rhoda looked up. George, with a quick movement, pointed to the door, and sprang up the steps of the house. He must speak to her now that she had seen him. For what else had he come? She was frightened, and did not move at first in answer to his signs. She was alone. Aunt

Morgan and the girls were drinking tea at the schools, but Uncle John was in the study. She did not want him to see George. It would only make a fuss and an explanation—there had been too much already. She got up and left the window, and then went into the hall and stood by the door undecided; and as she stood there she heard a low voice outside say, "Rhoda! let me in."

Rhoda still hesitated. "Let me in," said the voice again, and she opened the door a very little way, and put her foot against it.

"Good-night, George," she said, in a whisper. "Good-night. Go home. Dolly is so anxious about you."

"I have come to see you," said George. "Why won't you let me in, Rhoda?"

"I am afraid," said Rhoda.

"You need not be afraid, Rhoda," he said, going back a step. "Dear, will you forgive me for having frightened you?" and he came nearer again.

"I can't—go, go," cried Rhoda, hastily. "Here is some one," and suddenly, with all her might, she pushed the door in his face. It shut with a bang, with all its iron knobs and locks rattling.

"What is it?" said John Morgan, looking out of his study.

"I had opened the door, Uncle John," said Rhoda. Her heart beat a little. Would George go away? She thought she heard footsteps striking down the street. Then she felt more easy. She told herself once more that it was far better to have no scenes nor explanations, and she sat down quietly to her evening's task in a corner of her uncle's study. She was making some pinafores for the little Costellos, and she tranquilly stitched and tucked and hemmed. John Morgan liked to see her busy at her womanly work, her little lamp duly trimmed, and her busy fingers working for others more thriftless.

And outside in the moonlight George walked away in a new fury. What indignity had he subjected himself to? He gave a bitter sort of laugh. He had not expected much, but this was worse than anything he had expected. Reproaches, coldness, indifference, all these he was prepared for. He knew in his heart of hearts that Rhoda did not care for him; and what further wrong could she do him than this injury that people inflict every day upon each other? She had added scorn to her indifference; and again George laughed to himself, thinking of this wooden door Rhoda had clapped upon his passion, and her summary way of thrusting him out.

At one time, instead of banging the door, she used to open it wide. She used to listen to him, with her wonderful dark eyes fixed on his face. Now, what had happened? He was the same man, she was the same woman, and nothing was the same. George mechanically walked on towards his own home—if Church House could be so called. He went across the square, and by a narrow back street, and he tried the garden gate, and found it open, and went in, with some vague idea of finding

Dolly, and calling her to the bench beside the pond, and of telling her of all his trouble. That slam of the door kept sounding in his ears, a sort of knell to his love.

But George was in no vein of luck that night. The garden was deserted and mysterious, heavy with sweet scents in the darkness. He went down the dark path and came back again, and there was a rustle among the trees; and as he walked across the lawn towards the lighted window of the oak room, he heard two voices clear in the silence, floating up from some kitchen below. He knew Sam's croak; he did not recognize the other's voice.

"Mademoiselle is gone to dance. I like to dance too," it said. "Will you come to a ball and dance with me, Mr. Sam?"

Then followed old Sam's chuckle. "I'll dance with you, Mademoiselle," he said.

George thought it sounded as if some evil spirit of the night were mocking his trouble. And so Dolly was dancing while he was roaming about in his misery. Even Dolly had forgotten his pain. Even Rhoda had turned him out. Who cared what happened to him now?

He went to the window of the oak room and looked in. Lady Sarah was sitting there alone, shading her eyes from the light. There were papers all round about her. The lamp was burning behind her, and the light was reflected in the narrow glass above her tall chimney-piece.

He saw her put out her hand and slowly take a paper that was lying on the table, and tear it down the middle. It looked like a will, he thought. Poor Aunt Sarah! she looked very old and worn and sad. How ill he had repaid her kindness! She should be spared all further anxiety and trouble for him. Then he put out his two hands with a wild farewell motion. He had not meant her to see him, but the window was ajar and flew open, and then he walked in; and Lady Sarah, looking up, saw George standing before her. He was scarcely himself all this time: if he had found Dolly all might have ended differently.

"George?" said Lady Sarah, frightened by his wild looks, "what has happened, my dear?"

"I have come to say good-by to you," he wildly cried. "Aunt Sarah, you will never have any more trouble with me. You have been a thousand thousand times too good to me!" And he flung his two arms round her neck and kissed her, and almost before she could speak he was gone. . . .

A few minutes later Marker heard a fall, and came running upstairs. She found Lady Sarah lying half-conscious on the ground.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE SLOW SAD HOURS.

DOLLY and her mother had left the Middletons when John Morgan drove up in a hansom, with a message from his mother to bring them back at once. The servant told him that they were only just gone, and he drove off in pursuit. Bucklersbury House was blazing in the darkness, with its many windows open and alight, and its crowds pouring in and its music striking up. Morgan sprang out of his cab and hurried across the court, and under the horses' noses, and pushed among the footmen to the great front door where the inscribing angels of the *Morning Post* were stationed. The servants would have sent him back, but he told his errand in a few hasty words, and was allowed to walk into the hall. He saw a great marble staircase all alight, and people going up; and, by some good fortune, one of the very first persons he distinguished was Dolly, who had only just come, and who was following her mother and Robert. She, too, caught sight of the familiar face in the hall below, and stopped short.

"Mamma," she said, "there is John Morgan making signs. Something has happened."

Mrs. Palmer did not choose to hear. She was going in; she was at the gates of Paradise: she was not going to be kept back by John Morgan. There came a cheerful clang of music from above.

Dolly hesitated; the curate beckoned to her eagerly. "Mamma, I must go back to him," said Dolly, and before her mother could remonstrate she had stopped short and slid behind a diplomat, a lord with a blue ribbon, an aged countess; in two minutes she was at the foot of the staircase, Robert meanwhile serenely proceeding ahead, and imagining that his ladies were following.

In two words, John Morgan had told Dolly to get her shawl, that her aunt was ill, that she had been asking for her. Dolly flew back to the cloak-room: she saw her white shawl still lying on the table, and she seized it and ran back to John Morgan again, and then they had hurried through the court and among the carriages to the place where the hansom was waiting.

"And I was away from her!" said Dolly. That was nearly all she said. It was her first trouble—overwhelming, unendurable, bewildering, as first troubles are. When they drove up to Church House, the front looked black, and closed, and terrible somehow. Dolly's heart beat as she went in.

Everything seemed a little less terrible when she had run upstairs, and found her aunt lying in the familiar room, with a faint odour of camphor and chloroform, and Marker coming and going very quietly. Mrs. Morgan was there with her bonnet cocked a little on one side; she came up and

took Dolly's hand with real kindness, and said some words of encouragement, and led her to the bed-side. As Dolly looked at Aunt Sarah's changed face, she gulped for the first time one of life's bitter draughts. They don't last long, those horrible moments; they pass on, but they leave a burning taste; it comes back again and again with the troubles of life.

Lady Sarah seemed to recognize Dolly when she came to the bed-side, then she relapsed again, and lay scarce conscious, placid, indifferently waiting the result of all this nursing and anxious care. The struggles of life and its bustling anxieties had passed away from that quiet room, never more to return.

Dolly sat patiently by the bed-side. She had not taken off her evening dress, she never moved, she scarcely breathed, for fear of disturbing her dear sick woman. If Frank Raban could have seen her then, he would not have called her cold! Those loving looks and tender ways might almost have poured new life into the worn-out existence that was ebbing away. The night sped on, as such nights do pass. She heard the sound of carriage-wheels coming home at last, and crept downstairs to meet the home-comers.

Dolly did not ask her mother what had delayed her when the two came in. She met them with her pale face. She was still in her white dress, with the dying roses in her hair. Henley, who had meant to reproach her for deserting them without a word, felt ashamed for once before her. She seemed to belong to some other world, far away from that from which he had just come. She told her story very simply. The doctors said there had been one attack such as this once before, which her aunt had kept concealed from them all. They ordered absolute quiet. Marker was to be nurse, and one other person. "Of course that must be me, mamma. I think Aunt Sarah would like me best," she said, with a faint smile. "Mrs. Morgan! No, dear mamma, not Mrs. Morgan." Then suddenly she burst into tears. "Oh, mamma, I have never seen any one so ill," she said; but the next minute she had overcome her emotion and wiped her eyes.

"My dearest child, it is most distressing, and that you should have missed your ball, too!" said Philippa. "I said all along, if you remember, that she was looking a perfect wreck. You would not listen to me. Robert, turn that sofa out of the draught. I shall not go to bed. Julie can come down here and keep me company after you go."

"I must go," said Robert; "I have still some work to finish. Take care of yourself, Dora—remember you belong to me now. I hope there will be better news in the morning."

From one room to the other, all the next day, Dolly went with her heavy heart—it seemed to drag at her as she moved, to dull her very anxiety. It was only a pain, it did not rise to the dignity of an emotion. Mrs. Palmer felt herself greatly neglected; she was taken ill in the afternoon and begged to see the doctor, who made light of her ailment;

towards evening Mrs. Palmer was a great deal better. She came down into the drawing-room, and sent Eliza Twells over for John Morgan. Lady Sarah still lay stricken silent, but her pulse was better the doctor said : she could move her arm a little : it had been lying helpless before. Faithful Marker sat by her side rubbing her cold hands.

"Aunt Sarah, do you know me?" whispered Dolly, bending over her.

Lady Sarah faintly smiled in answer.

"Tell George to come back," she said slowly. "Dolly, I did as you wished; are you satisfied?" She had gone back to the moment when she was taken ill.

"Dearest Aunt Sarah," said Dolly, covering her hand with kisses. Then she ran down to tell her mother the good news. "Aunt Sarah was rallying, was talking more like herself again. We only want George to make her well again. He must come. Where is he? Why does he not come?"

"Don't ask me anything about George," said Mrs. Palmer, putting up her hands.

This was the day after the ball, but no George came, although Dolly looked for him at every instant. John Morgan, of his own accord, sent a second message to him and another to Raban. In the course of the day an answer arrived from the tutor: "*G. left Cambridge yesterday. Your telegram to him lying unopened.*"

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## The Duc de St. Simon.

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THE sternest critics of the literature of France, those who are most alive to its want of spiritual poetry, and of poetic humour, will not deny the charm that belongs to its long line of writers of memoirs. This branch of history, dealing with events from a personal point of view, mingling biography with history proper, and autobiography with both, requires a special type of genius, with which the French seem to be endowed more liberally than their less vivacious neighbours of other nations. And they are fully alive to the claims of those who have gained them their renown in this department, while they are far from indifferent to what foreign literatures have done for the world in the same way. They have not only two well-edited collections of their own Memoirs, but they have a French version (formed at the instance of M. Guizot) of the English Memoirs of the Civil War. Clio is to them a veritable Muse; but they love a Clio in modern garments, and warm with modern life; a Clio, it may be, in the robes of a queen, or the weeds of a widow, it may be in powder, paint, and pearls,—gossiping, coquettish, and epigrammatic.

The famous author of this class whose name stands at the head of our present essay, has gradually taken the first place in it, and become a typical man in French literature. He is now as well-known as Louis Quatorze himself; and Louis Quatorze is better known through him than he ever was before. There is matter for curious reflection in the fate of St. Simon's *Memoirs*, and in the duty performed in the world by the Duke himself. His fame is a resurrection of a kind unique in the history of letters. He was of high rank; served a while in the army; lived long at the court; was admired, distinguished, consulted among his peers and superiors, in an age when France was more conspicuous in Europe than in any other. But the genius, by which all Europe now knows him, was a secret to his contemporaries. His very name does not occur in the brilliant and elaborate work which Voltaire dedicated to his times, and which preserves the names of hundreds of Frenchmen. The *Memoirs* were still sleeping a sleep deep as that of their writer; and when they rose from it one may almost say that he and his generation rose along with them. Louis XIV. had been more than a century in his grave. The revolution, which was one of the results that his splendid reign helped to prepare, had come and gone. People turned from the fresher celebrities, with whose names Europe was full, to look at the groups of Versailles and Marly once more, and to discuss, eagerly, the merits and demerits of the genius to whom they owed the apparition. With a play on the words of his brother-noble, Byron, we may say that St. Simon, too, awoke and found himself famous. And he has

been growing in fame ever since. His work, we need hardly say, is sufficiently voluminous. Twenty volumes—or, in the latest edition of M. Cheruel, thirteen, with small type, and some four hundred close pages each—test the perseverance of the ordinary reader. But they reward it abundantly. For the book is one of the most interesting of books, and, among all the curious things it reveals, few are so curious as the figure of the Duc de St. Simon himself in person. The historian, as a general rule, may be contemplated apart from his work. But it is one of the conditions of the memoir-writer that he and his memoirs have an intimate personal connection. The mirror which he holds up to his generation must always, at one angle or another, reflect the image of himself. For this reason, and because the ultimate value of such memoirs (apart from their mere interest as pleasant reading) must depend on the writer's personality, let us take a survey of the career of the Duke before attempting any critical estimate of the Duke's literary legacy to us. Such a study will illustrate the species as well as the individual, for St. Simon was born a memoir-writer, just as he was born a duke, and it was his good fortune that nothing could have been more suitable to his peculiar gifts than his peculiar position.

The family of Rouvroy, to which Louis, second Duke of St. Simon, and peer of France, belonged, was of the ancient French nobility. His own branch was not rich, and his immediate ancestors sought in the field, and in the court, such advancement as might make up for the reduced and embarrassed condition of their estates. His father, Claude, was accordingly placed by the grandfather—an old soldier strictly royalist—as page to Louis XIII., a common opening at that time for youngsters of condition. The King was very fond of hunting, and a dexterous turn of young Claude, when his master needed a fresh mount one day, brought him into notice and favour. His favour increased. He was made, first, gentleman of the chamber, and afterwards had the government of Blaye, a station of importance which bridled Guienne and Saintonge; and other good appointments and distinctions, including the dukedom and peerage. The author of the *Memoirs* was his only son, born of a second marriage with Charlotte de l'Aubépine, in 1675, when he was sixty-eight years old. Both father and mother lived to see their son grown up, and took great care of his training and education. One sees that the youth had a grave up-bringing, under a father who was old, and a mother no longer young, both living in traditions which had begun to wane; the father rigidly loyal, but rather after the feudal type than the oriental one preferred by Louis XIV.; the mother a pious, prudent Catholic: both high-minded, honourable, charitable persons, with a trifle of temper, and a strong sentiment of aristocracy. Their heir shared in all these qualities, which gave to the peculiar vocation appointed for him its distinctive form and spirit. He did not show much taste for collegiate studies or science, but was born, as he says, "for reading and history." When still a boy, charmed with the *Memoirs of Bassompierre* and others, he resolved to write the memoirs of his own time, and he actually began

them in 1694, before he was twenty. This unmistakeable sign of "a vocation" for the business is one of the facts which at once distinguishes St. Simon from other memoir-writers, and helped to place him at their head. Some have written such books to amuse their old age, or vindicate their public careers, to exalt their friends, and punish their enemies. St. Simon had keen sensibilities, and strong opinions like the rest of them. But he loved the art for its own sake, by an original instinct, and continued it through life, with an unwearied interest. To him it was as poetry, or painting, or astronomy to other men. Appearing to pass his life in the usual pursuits of his class, he was all the while studying his age with the intensity of a Kepler employed upon the planet Mars, or a Porson busy with the text of Euripides. Everybody whom he knew, or saw, unconsciously sat to him for his portrait. He sifted the loosest gossip for historical meal. He weighed all information, and despised none. To him, this habitual observation was the chief pleasure he drew from the politics and society of his generation. But he had distinct political and social views of his own, which he laboured to get carried out according to the means open to him, as we shall see by-and-by.

He was only sixteen in 1691, when his father took him to Versailles to present him to King Louis: an eventful day for the boy, beyond doubt, and an eventful day for the King, too, if he could have known it. Cannot we imagine the keen wondering gaze of the precocious youngster, as he first stands in the presence of the *Grand Roi*?—a little awed, a little reverent, but still critical, and, above all, intensely curious? He feels the effect of the King's high manner, that manner which made Bolingbroke say so well that he was "the best actor of majesty that ever sat upon a throne." But it is not the fear of a mere novice longing to become a courtier that he feels; his love of stately manners is genuine; and he already strong in the consciousness of growing intellectual power, and of his share in the proud traditions of the nobility of France. The King embraced his father's old and faithful favourite three times, and then observed that our hero was "very young," to which venerable Duke Claude replied in the becoming courtly style, that he would serve his Majesty all the longer. It was as if one of the proud old Pharaohs had been innocently introduced to his future embalmer! But who was to foresee that? The King innocently welcomed only a new little planet to revolve around his great solar orb of a court, with the hundreds of others there,—

Together singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is divine,

—in a chorus of worship perhaps unsurpassed since the days of Xerxes. He appointed the youth to his regiment of black musketeers, for in this, or its sister regiment of cavalry, the greys, everybody had to serve a year before beginning his military course. St. Simon was now within a distance from which useful studies of the court-life and its chief could begin. While others only worshipped and grovelled before the idol, St. Simon, making

the necessary kotoo due by every tradition and example from a polite patrician, yet already began to look closely as to how much of him was mere timber, paint, and jewellery.

Louis XIV. was at this time not much beyond the prime of life, and he was still in all the strength of his glory. He was fifty-three years old, and undoubtedly at the head of Europe, Spain being decadent, Germany divided, and England only beginning her reaction against the vassalage of Charles II. and his brother, under the leadership of William of Orange. He had gained all the important triumphs which had given him the title of "Great," and the taint of fraud in some of which has been so bitterly expiated by France in our own time. He was master of French Flanders, Franche-Comté, and Burgundy. He had inflicted horrible suffering upon Holland and Germany. He had taken Luxembourg, stolen Strasburg, and bought Casal. His ambition was known to be still unsatisfied; his designs upon the Spanish crown were foreseen; and hence Europe was now engaged in the confederacy which shook his kingdom to its foundations, and prepared humiliation for his gloomy old age. The influence of the men of genius (his support of whom constituted his charm in the eyes of Voltaire) was still unrivalled, although some of the greatest of them had passed away. His personal despotism retained all its unquestioned ascendancy, and was one of the dangerous legacies which he left to his family and to France. In private life the King had now become what we may call a respectable sinner, and was gradually sliding into a quasi-devout condition—half conventional, half founded on fear of the Devil—under the adroit management of Madame de Maintenon. That lady had been a respectable sinner herself, and was a penitent after his Majesty's own fashion, having passed from a decorous demirep into a private unacknowledged wife, and added to the perfumes of Versailles a tinge of holy water. She ruled over Louis's passion of religious fear, as the Vallière, the Montespan, the Fontanges had over another passion, and, as far as we can see, with quite as little excuse. Sensual by calculation, amusing by study, with the cunning of Becky Sharp varnished over with the gravity of a court which was always pompous in its gayest times, she suited the mature Louis admirably. And she got her reward for betraying the Montespan, persecuting the Protestants, deserting Fénelon, and so forth—not the declaration of marriage which she hoped, but the privilege of nursing a morose, melancholy, disappointed, and meanly-timid old man, round whose neck she had hung relics probably as false as her caresses, and whom she fled from for ever when he had the death-rattle in his throat. Of all the mistresses of Louis XIV., we confess that the one we like least is the legal one!

King Louis, then, was thoroughly formed and ripe when St. Simon began to serve him. He was distant from his animated youth, but he was also still distant from his sad old age. He still played the dictator abroad, and was the real dictator at home. So, St. Simon's first service was in the Low Countries, in 1692, when his Majesty took Namur. It



was part of the etiquette of the French wars of that time that the King never sat down in person before a place until it was certain to be taken. His heavy carriages rolled along with the ladies of his court in them, and a siege was a spectacle like the playing of the fountains at Versailles. After the fall of Namur this time, the King returned home to marry his bastard daughter, Mademoiselle de Blois, to the Duc de Chartres, afterwards Duc d'Orleans and Regent. St. Simon was an eyewitness of the scenes preceding this event, and of the ill-disguised indignation of the Duc's mother, "Madame." Once while his Majesty was giving her a very low reverence in his best "grand manner," the lady made a pirouette, so that when he drew himself up, he saw only her back as she proceeded towards the door. St. Simon was already as keen against the royal bastards as he was all the rest of his life. He saw that all distinctions were to be levelled for the sake of the monarchy, distinctions religious as well as historical, and from the first he fought against this absolutism as far as such fighting was possible. Here, we have the key to his constant eagerness in the cause of his own order of dukes and peers of France. With him this was an historical and political, as well as a personal feeling—quite a different thing from that mere love of title which may exist in a city knight as well as in the heir of Plantagenet barons.

In 1698, St. Simon went again to the Low Countries in the Royal Roussillon regiment of cavalry. This was the campaign—so admirably sketched by Macaulay—where the King suddenly returned to Versailles rather than fight the Prince of Orange with the best chances. Alas, that such a plumed and jewelled hat should have a white feather in it! St. Simon (his father died in May that year, and he was now Duke,) stayed, and fought at Neerwinden mounted on a bay horse.

When he returned to Paris, the question of settling him in life, now that he was head of his branch, and that his father's governments had been conferred upon him by the King, much engaged his mother's attention and his own. Various young ladies of sufficient rank were passed in review; but before the young Duke met the one whom he was fortunate enough to marry, he took a step eminently characteristic of him. Neither millions, he writes, nor the fashion of the time, nor his own needs would ever have tempted him to a *mésalliance*; but, neither on the other hand, were mere rank and fortune sufficient in his eyes. He and his intimates aimed at something higher than the ordinary standard of the nobles of the day, and were quietly religious after a fashion of their own, which was not at all the fashion of Madame de Maintenon and the Jesuits. They aspired to purity as well as dignity of life; and, compared with the Lancelots in red heels, and the Viviers in hoop-petticoats, of that court without an Arthur, were Arthurs themselves. The Duc de Beauvilliers, Fénelon's friend, was one of this good school; and from sheer reverence for his character, St. Simon proposed himself to him as a suitor for one of his daughters. The eldest was going into a convent,—she was out of the question. The second was deformed. The third was a child. In short, no alliance was then possible,

but we need hardly wonder that the Duc de Beauvilliers was much struck by the loyal affection of his junior, and continued, as he promised, to regard himself as his father, through life. St. Simon retired for a season to console himself at La Trappe, where it was his habit to retire at certain intervals, always, although as yet shy that such a fact should be known to his comrades of the army and the court.

To that period belongs, while St. Simon was still so young, his first distinction in a field where there was plenty of work cut out for him. The Marshal Duke of Luxembourg thought the opportunity created by his military successes, good for claiming the second place in precedence among the dukes and peers of France; which gave rise to a celebrated *procès de préséance*. St. Simon, here and always, was resolute for the rights of his order. His turn for historical studies fell in naturally with his sensibility to what he thought the fallen condition of the *noblesse*, and this union of duke and genealogist—antiquary and grandee—made him a formidable opponent to pretenders of whatever degree. Much good wit has been lavished by the French upon the Duke's ducal hobby. "He saw nothing in France but the nobility, nothing in the nobility but the dukes, and nothing in the dukes but himself," says one satirist. This, of course, is fun. To do St. Simon justice, we must remember that while his whole generation in France, and indeed everywhere else, attached great importance to precedence, the etiquette of Louis XIV.'s court being a machinery as elaborate as that of a clock, he saw a symbolical value in ranks, forms, and ceremonies. No man was more penetrated with the idea of *noblesse oblige*. He had a sincere love for the well-being of France. He kept himself pure from intrigue, servility, and self-seeking, just as he did from the grosser vices of the time. If he sinned in over-doing the details of what he undertook for his order, whether by action or pen, this was rather pedantry than vanity or prejudice. He was as hard on the encroachments of his own class as on any other; and he loved and served merit wherever he found it. Such activity as this he showed so early in the Luxembourg case, made him many enemies, and did him disservice with the King. His Majesty liked nothing that savoured of independence of view, and anything like historical accuracy in questions of rank interfered with his views about his bastards, whom he was constantly putting forward to the prejudice of the princes of the blood. He had a terrible punishment for this, in the behaviour of the Duc de Maine, in the campaign of 1695. That favourite's behaviour struck out from M. d'Elbœuf an admirable *bon-mot* preserved by St. Simon. In the presence of a large company, that General asked his illegitimate highness where he was likely to serve next year, for he, d'Elbœuf, was determined to serve under him? Pressed to say why, the General explained: "One is always sure of one's life with you!" Namur had been lost, again, that season. It was only by accident that King Louis heard of his son's unfortunate conduct, and the occasion was long remembered. He so far forgot his royal reserve and gravity, as to cane a valet whom he had seen pocketing a biscuit—an incident which filled the

court with icy terror—melting gradually into delicious ripples of chuckling laughter when the whole story became known.

St. Simon made his last campaign—his station being Germany—at this time. In the promotion of 1702, he was passed over, and in a way that induced him to retire from the service. The King was more or less sulky with him for the next three years. At last, some explanation became necessary in consequence of another question of ranks, and St. Simon spoke to the King with respectful frankness. He was well received—rather to the surprise of the court. Mediocre, selfish, despotic as he was, the King could bear being addressed with a well-bred freedom by a man against whom he was prejudiced. In 1706 he even chose St. Simon for the embassy to Rome. But this fell through, with no other result than to make people who were already jealous of St. Simon a little more jealous. His enemies used a means of injuring him in the royal eyes afterwards, the success of which illustrates the character of the court. They, as it were, poisoned him with sugar. They praised to the King his talents, application, energies—qualities which his Majesty loved not in a *grand seigneur*. His ideal of a *grand seigneur* was a high-bred gentleman helping to make his court brilliant, and with no brains nor opinions in particular. Brains were useful for Ministers, no doubt, and these were best chosen, he thought, from among men who had nothing but the royal favour to boast of or to rest upon. The noble was an ornament, the Minister was a clerk, in the eyes of this stupendous egotist, whose fair good sense fell far short of genius, whose education had been neglected, whose patronage of the arts sprang from policy rather than taste, and whose relish for intellect for its own sake was infinitely below that of our Charles II., not to mention a sovereign so high above both as Frederick the Great. It is probable that he looked with uneasiness on the growing genius and influence of St. Simon, whose fine luminous eyes had such an awkward power of penetration in them. And the Duke was so discreet, and had such a judicious knowledge of what was due to kings as well as dukes,—nay, of what was due to this King himself, for the good side of him and his reign! A mere *frondeur*, however witty, a rash man who could not keep his temper in check, and violated the *bienséances*, how easy to dispose of him! But St. Simon knew the position perfectly, and knew the man he had to deal with. Nobody more admired the King's good-breeding—due, as he more than once reminds us, to his training under the Queen-mother and her ladies, long ago—a generation (we may add) unjustly kept out of sight by their successors till the studies of M. Cousin and others shed a new light upon them in our own time. But there was another side to his Majesty and his system, and we may forgive St. Simon's love of aristocracy for the sake of the extra zeal which it gave to his criticism of despotism. The whole gist of that criticism, carried through his many volumes, is, that Louis's systematic absolutism paralyzed and deteriorated the national life. We have seen France in our own generation suffer from the same recurring phenomenon; and the nearest modern representatives of St. Simon in her

literature are not the amusing sketchers of manners, but Montalembert and De Tocqueville.

By the time at which we have arrived, it was pretty obvious that St. Simon would never be employed by the *Grand Monarque*. His part under that reign was to be an observer. But he was much younger than the King, and there was a new generation in the field, from whom he hoped something better for France. The *Memoirs*, no doubt, went steadily on, and there is reason to believe that his Majesty had an uneasy suspicion of their existence. Our Duke, however, had still another function—one of great though silent importance in all spheres of life—that of a confidential adviser. To the King he was only a polite grandee, viewed with something of a jealous disquiet. But to other personages of condition he was a friendly counsellor, thoughtful, watchful, influential for good. The Duc d'Orleans had been a companion of his youth, and from 1706, when they renewed relations, he was as much a good genius as any one could be to a man whose fine talents and naturally amiable character were weakened and sullied by long-continued debauchery. He held a similar place in the friendship of the Duke of Burgundy, Louis's grandson, the Dauphin, of whom France and all Europe held high hopes, which were buried with him in his untimely grave. The court was full of cabals—the shifting sands, dangerous eddies, and treacherous currents under its brilliant flow. St. Simon's independent position, and high character, made his advice as trustworthy as his subtle penetration made it acute. Of these cabals one of the most formidable was that of the brutal but able Duc de Vendôme, whose interests seemed to him and his friends to require the ruin of the Duke of Burgundy. Vendôme behaved very ill to Burgundy in Flanders, where he was serving under him, and where (1708) they lost the battle of Oudenarde. The loss was imputed by Vendôme and his friends to their commander-in-chief, and they filled Paris with libels against him. His father, "Monseigneur," called, somewhat infelicitously, the Great Dauphin, was still alive, and want of sense or courage, or both, made him listen with approval to the enemies of his heir. St. Simon worked for the injured duke, and was freely calumniated. When the Minister, Chamillart, was disgraced, he did not desert him, but with perhaps more prominence than was necessary, paid homage to his decline. This fidelity is one of the most honourable of St. Simon's traits; and the quality was a rare one, of difficult exercise, in the court of Louis XIV.

Accordingly, we find St. Simon steadily rising in social, and so in political influence, during the King's last years. Honours which servile courtiers aspired to in vain, were pressed upon this duke and duchess, whose high tone of independence and decorous purity of life were equally a reproach to the glittering crew around them. The duchess was made *dame d'honneur* to the Duchess of Berry, on her marriage with the King's grandson; and they were installed in some of the most convenient apartments at Versailles. The Duke, as we have said, was not the kind of man for employment at that time, but in a private quiet way, he had

great importance, by a sort of diplomatic exercise of his talents within the court circle. The old King's sun—spite of its proud motto, *Nec pluribus impar*—was gradually setting in gloomy clouds; his superiority was broken abroad by defeats, and at home by public misery and discontent. All eyes were turned,—and who must have felt that quicker than the weary old man?—to the future. The death of Monseigneur destroyed the hopes of one cabal—not to St. Simon's displeasure. Then the star of hope shone over the head of the Duke of Burgundy—to none with a sweeter lustre than St. Simon. There is something quaintly melancholy in the Duke's hopeful watching over that Dauphin—a virtuous prince, a reading man, bent upon being a good king; and then, so severe upon royal bastards, so sound upon the dignity of dukes! What a prospect for St. Simon's country, and for his hobby! He became to the heir of Louis in his manhood, a teacher such as Fénelon had been in his youth; and drew up state papers for him to study. It was a labour like that which Bolingbroke (now, 1711, nearing his zenith) undertook years afterwards with Prince Frederick, the labour of a philosophical sculptor upon the figure of a patriot king. The Frenchman had the better material to work upon. But every royal family is doomed to have its Marcellus. The graceful and lively daughter of Savoy, the Dauphiness, whose company had given to the decaying Louis the last gleams of gaiety of his life, had not been dead a week, before her husband too died, and their bodies were taken together to St. Denis. It was a terrible blow to St. Simon. It might have been a serious danger if his friend the Duc de Beauvilliers had not dexterously contrived to extract from the dead prince's casket some of the secret letters which St. Simon had sent him.

That the Dauphin had been poisoned was a general belief, and was the belief of St. Simon himself. He was intensely interested in what followed upon it. We know his friendly relations with the Duc d'Orleans, of whom he was a sober mentor. One of his diplomatic successes had been to induce him to get rid of the dangerous Madame d'Argenton, and reconcile himself with his duchess. The fidelity of the counsellor was now put to a new test. A rumour was industriously spread that the Duc d'Orleans was the poisoner of the Dauphin, and this rumour, according to St. Simon, was supported by the secret activity of the remains of the Vendôme cabal. Vendôme the bestial was now in Spain, where this same year, 1712, he came to his end, being plundered by valets upon his death-bed, and buried with kings in the Escorial. But the old allies, whose interest it had been to damage the Duke of Burgundy, were now interested in laying his death to the door of the Duke of Orleans. The Duc de Maine, and his friend the Maintenon, aided by some survivors of the other cabal of Monseigneur, or of Meudon, all hated d'Orleans, and now hated and feared him worse than ever, as a legitimate prince of the blood, whom every death in the direct royal line brought nearer to the supreme power in France. The faults of that prince, too well known even now as "the Regent," were plain enough, and have been handled with perfect

frankness by St. Simon himself. He was a debauchee and a scoffer. But he was not, therefore, necessarily a murderer into the bargain, and he had less to gain from the Dauphin's being out of the way, than his accuser the Duke of Maine, who knew the Dauphin's views about the illegitimate princes and their triumphs. But the bastard, timid as he was, and the veteran mistress, whom the King had made an "honest woman," but could not make a good woman of, were successful for the time. The Duke of Orleans, "grandson of France," was publicly shunned by the courtiers on every occasion. Here, the Duc de St. Simon behaved with the loyalty of a friend and the courage of a gentleman. He visited the Duke and lived with him on his usual footing. There was probably a dash of pride in the marked way in which he was seen to sit with the disgraced prince in the corners of saloons, or to stroll with him in the gardens of Marly in sight of the very windows of the King and Madame de Maintenon. His friend, the Duc de Beauvilliers, fairly forced him to go for a short visit at this period to his estates at La Ferté; perhaps he so avoided an explosion; but as to his main offence, he was incorrigible. Madame de Maintenon and the Duke of Maine were working day and night to prevent, if it were possible, the Orleans regency, looming so large ahead, now that the Duke of Berry (May 4, 1714) had followed his brother the Dauphin to the grave, and there were none of the King's descendants of an age to assume power. They had induced the weary, breaking sovereign to decree that Maine and the other bastards should rank with princes of the blood, whereas they had hitherto held an intermediate rank between these and the dukes and peers. They had vexed him into making an unjust testament in their favour, the scent of which brought troops of sycophants on the Duke de Maine's track. And St. Simon was as much isolated now at the court in one way as the Duke of Orleans. Nobody, indeed, could hint, even in ears greediest of slander, anything against the Duke's honour or the purity and order of his life and household. But his best friends, the Dukes of Chevreuse and Beauvilliers, were gone, and the men in power and favour were of a meaner type. There is some reason to believe that the King himself, who never took to St. Simon, and who detested the aristocratic independence of his principles and character, did him more justice, at the last, than any of his own peculiar courtiers.

Such was the state of things as the King's death drew near. The faction whom his life kept together watched Orleans keenly, trusting much for their success to the harm which his own folly and their spite had done him, and keeping the King's will in reserve. It was plain that the loyal St. Simon would be one of the men of the future, and it is amusing to see how interested persons drew near the Duke—to fish in those still but very deep waters and come away with empty baskets—to play the courtier to a man to whom a court was, by this time, what a chess-board and its pieces was to Philidor. The old Marshal Villeroy was one of those who, thanks to the supple Maintenon, recovered, in his old age, the favour which he had lost by losing the battle of Ramillies, and was now a high Minister of



state; though, at best, a brave, ignorant, gossiping old soldier, with much turn for playing the courtier, and a large budget of questionable stories. He used to ask himself to dinner at St. Simon's—the Duke keeping a hospitable table for his friends, like our own fine old English gentlemen. The most perfect courtesy awaited him there, we may be sure, but, except that and his dinner, he carried nothing else away. Father Tellier, the Jesuit, also came much about St. Simon at this time, but the Duke distrusted him, and did not love his order. The crafty Duke of Noailles was another intriguer of the crisis. How long the old monarch's sand would take to run out was the one question of the day. The world flowed to and ebbed from the saloons of the Duke of Orleans almost in exact harmony with the state of Louis's pulse. One day he rather rallied, and was known to have eaten a couple of biscuits with a glass of Alicante wine. At once the rooms of the future Regent were deserted, much to his amusement and that of St. Simon.

Our Duke, profoundly affected by the loss of the Dauphin, saw nothing for it now but to make the best of the Duke of Orleans. That prince had talents and knowledge and likeable qualities, in spite of his facile indolence and fatal love of pleasure. If Louis XIV. was, as Thackeray says, a royal snob, his nephew was a royal Bohemian. The grave old King, now about to face the King of Terrors (and it must be admitted that he received his brother monarch with all possible decorum, and took leave of the world with the stately politeness which distinguished him), had been quite as vicious a man as d'Orleans, and inferior to him in brains and knowledge. But he had been, always, prudent and self-restrained, and always, more or less, a worker with some head for business; whereas the Regent was a wild, not a calculating, sensualist, whose day began with a headache and ended with an orgy. In the interval between these, the lucid interval of the afternoon, when he had cooled, and taken his chocolate, Orleans could appreciate sound sense and honest advice as much as anybody. Unfortunately, the night brought round his supper with its bacchanals and bottles, and the boon companions of that hour spoiled the influence of the wise friends of the rational part of the day. His majestic uncle went about his very pleasures with a dignified gravity. He did not care for wit and witty comrades, though he occasionally said an epigrammatic thing in a deliberate way, much as we may suppose an owl to lay its egg. After dallying with the sultana of the time—the *maitresse en titre*—he would go publicly to bed to his Queen, one grandee handing the shirt, another holding the *bougeoir*, like Olympian Jove in Homer:—

"Ἐρθα κάθενδ' ἀναβῆς· παρὰ δὲ χρυσόθρονος Ἥρη.

The Regent revelled with a crew like that of Comus. St. Simon had much the same kind of difficulties with him that Clarendon had with Charles II. There was a whole side of the Regent's life which, though too well knowing all about it, St. Simon never saw any more than we see the other half of the moon,



But men must work with the tools that they can get ; and St. Simon, the rather that he had a real personal liking for the Duc d'Orleans, laboured hard to prepare his middle-aged pupil for the duties of the regency. He had long been ready with a "Reform Bill" of his own for France, no inconsiderable part of which he gradually induced Philip to adopt. The general design was to convert the despotism of Louis XIV. into a constitutional monarchy, too aristocratic, perhaps, for modern tastes, but still much more liberal than the government of France for near a century before. He postulated monarchy, of course, as the only form of government possible for France, but he wanted a monarchy modified by sharing part of its power with the *noblesse*—not dominating through secretaries of state and their staffs, for whom he proposed to substitute councils, formed of higher and better elements. He hoped, thus, to train a school of statesmen from among the nobility, which body had long, he complained, been without any other function than that of getting itself killed in the wars ; being corrupted, meanwhile, by the consequent idleness and the extravagance of a merely ornamental court-life, which resulted in vulgar marriages for money, and a lowered tone of sentiment. To counteract all this, and make the order more worthy of France and more useful to it, St. Simon advocated a larger employment of its members in civil affairs. The decay of the *noblesse* had been accompanied by constant encroachments of the parliament, which, according to St. Simon, had improperly claimed rights not belonging to their historical position as legists. Forms and ceremonies, we know, ran through all the framework of French life at that time. Now, one usurpation of the parliament had particularly annoyed St. Simon as an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual presumption (from his point of view) of the body. At the receptions of peers, the first president, in calling out their names, kept his cap on, and did not uncover till he came to the princes of the blood ! President Novron had done this, in a marked manner, on the reception of a Noailles, afterwards Cardinal, in 1681. On that occasion, the Duc d'Uzès indignantly kept his hat on, and the order formally complained to the King. This well-known *affaire du bonnet*, as it was called, remained a standing grievance. St. Simon thought the establishment of the new government an excellent opportunity for keeping the parliament in its place, and showing it that a body of professional lawyers, however respectable as members of legal tribunals, had little but the name in common with the parliament of England.

With regard to ecclesiastical matters, St. Simon was strongly Gallican, and, although a good Catholic, detested the ultramontanism of which we hear so much in our day. The Constitution *Unigenitus*, and the Jesuits, had no more resolute enemy. He was for setting free the persons who had been imprisoned during the long religious controversies of the reign of Louis ; taking a firm while respectful tone with the Pope ; and politely getting Father Tellier, the King's Jesuit confessor, and his chief friends, out of the country.

While thus urging principles, he also took the liberty of proposing persons to the new governor of France. He advised that Harcourt and Huxelles should be retained. "But you, then," said Philip, one day during these discussions at Marly—"you propose everybody, and never name yourself; *à quoi donc voulez-vous être?*" This was graceful and friendly, and Philip went on to offer his counsellor the Finances. But St. Simon honestly pleaded his unfitness for this post, especially at a time when public affairs were such that bankruptcy seemed to him the only possible result. And then he went on to give his advice that the States-General should be summoned, as a kind of heroic remedy in the crisis to which the kingdom had come. The measure would be popular. The States-General would incur the responsibility of whatever was done. And they would aid the Regent in keeping in check the illegitimate princes so scandalously declared capable of succeeding to the crown.

Thus, the duke and the prince conferred, while the worn-out Louis lay dying. On Sunday the 1st of September, 1715, at a quarter-past eight in the morning, he died, three days before his seventy-seventh birthday. France had never seen so old a monarch, nor so long a reign.

Our business, of course, is with St. Simon, and with the regency only as far as he is concerned. Next morning, whatever was most distinguished in France was assembled with the parliament to meet the Regent and open the late King's will. Our Duke was the first man to speak in the assembly. He rose, before the president—uncovered, then covered himself again,—and said, in the midst of profound silence, that in consideration of the important questions before them, the peers had resolved to tolerate for the time—while protesting against them—all usurpations made to the disadvantage of their order; and that they had come to this resolution on the strength of a promise, the night before, from the Duke of Orleans, that their grievances should be attended to when the public business permitted. The Regent confirmed this. Then, a deputation from the parliament went to seek the King's testament and codicil—which were read in a dead silence—the keen St. Simon watching the effect with those sleepless eyes of his. The occasion was historic, and history had been the passion of his life; the inspiration of his politics, and his prejudices; his guide in hours of business, his favourite amusement in hours of leisure.

The codicil was the expression of the last concession made by the misled and exhausted King to the clique which ruled him, and ran contrary to his own words to the Duke of Orleans spoken after he had taken the sacrament. It tied the Regent up in such a way, that the real power must have rested with the Duc de Maine. The Regent addressed the assembly to this effect, insisting that his regency ought to be free and independent, and that he should choose his own Council. It was an anxious day. The sitting was adjourned to the evening. St. Simon, knowing Philip's fatal facility, and fearing that he might be swayed over into weak concessions, sent an excuse to the Cardinal de Noailles, with whom he was to have dined, and followed his chief to the Palais Royal.

He dined with him there, and they returned to the parliament. When the voting was gone through, the Regent's triumph was complete. The codicil was abrogated, and nothing was left to Maine but the superintendence of the education of the young King, afterwards Louis XV.

St. Simon was, as might have been expected, appointed to the council of regency; and the other councils, the establishment of which he had suggested, were soon in working order. But his project for a meeting of States-General fell through. It was destined that they should not meet till the memorable year 1789, when it was too late for them to do what St. Simon had dreamed of their doing.

During the regency, St. Simon always had much personal influence over Philip; but his politics were scarcely ever adopted. He was unfriendly, in vain, to the English alliance. He did not succeed in persuading his master to cultivate Czar Peter and Russia. He failed to prevent the infamous Cardinal Dubois from becoming first Minister. He broke down, owing to the opposition of the financiers, in his endeavours to abolish the *gabelle*—that salt-tax of odious memory which 80,000 *gabelleurs* were employed in collecting, and which filled the country with corruption and misery. Never did he know, till he was a member of the council of regency, how hard it was to do any good! (*Mém. ed Chéruel*, ix. 399.) "So few people," says he, "honestly wish it; and so many others have an interest contrary to any sort of good that can be proposed." On the other hand, the Duke had his successes and consolations. He had the satisfaction of assisting at the *Lit de Justice* of 1718 (in his proper place, below the Duc de Sully, but above the Duc de la Rochefoucauld!), where the bastard princes were solemnly reduced to their rank as peers, dating from the creation of their peerages. He had constant opportunities of serving worthy people, and he availed himself freely of his influence in that way. In the brilliant period of the financier Law, he and his duchess might have become as rich as they liked. But he would never accept any Mississippi shares, not even when the Regent himself pressed them upon him. And, when the Regent once reproached him for refusing the King's benefits, he contented himself with drawing some old arrears due to his father. He steadily declined, also, the place of governor to the young king. It is characteristic of the atrocious nature of faction, in that day, that a principal reason of St. Simon's refusal arose from his fears that if anything went wrong with the boy's health, the Regent, and himself as the Regent's confidential friend, would be exposed to the vilest calumnies.

For place as a source of gain, for place as a scene of pomp, the Duc de St. Simon cared little. But he did care for real historical rank, the distinction of his house, and the embellishment of his order. So, when in June 1721 the Regent announced to him his plan of a double marriage with Spair, by which the King should marry the Infanta, and the Prince of Asturias the Regent's daughter, St. Simon at once asked for the mission to Madrid. An extraordinary embassy to demand the Infanta's hand was, of course, necessary—and what an excellent opportunity for making his

second son, the Marquis of Ruffec, a *grand d'Espagne*! The *grandes* of Spain could not, indeed, he thought, be ranked with the dukes and peers of France—who could? But the best houses in Spain, and many German and Italian houses, held the grandeeship—why not Rouvroy, which, through one heiress at least, had an incontestable descent from Vermandois, scions of Charlemagne? The Regent assented at once, not much, as we may suppose, to the satisfaction of the powerful Cardinal Dubois, always St. Simon's enemy. The embassy went off excellently, and St. Simon's *Memoirs* contain an elaborate and most interesting account of it. To do any justice to that account, however, would require an essay; nor would "St. Simon in Spain" be a bad subject by itself in the hands of a writer familiar with the Duke, and not ignorant of the country. Mr. Ford made ample use of the *Memoirs*, which on all questions—regarding the Spanish aristocracy especially—are still of primary authority. Nowhere is St. Simon more characteristic than in this part of his narrative. His politeness and tact—the delicate shrewdness with which he managed to get his own way without pressing unpleasantly upon others—are everywhere quietly revealed; while he seizes character in his quick fashion as usual; and never allows his pet antiquarian studies and hobbies to interfere with practical observation, nor his inborn relish for etiquette and formalities to spoil his common sense. Spanish life struck a foreigner then much as it does now. St. Simon found it at its best,—dull, monotonous, unsocial—a heavy magnificence prevailing in great shows, illuminations, &c., now and then, but torpor and inferiority everywhere else; no genial hospitality, no literature to speak of anywhere; even the eating and drinking detestable except at a few tables of the nobles. The very Jesuits were not learned in Spain, he says. When he visited Toledo he found that the Cordeliers had pulled down the hall in which the illustrious councils of old were held, to make a kitchen there. His genealogical hobby in particular was sadly stinted of grass, or, to use a more accurate metaphor, of hay. By patient courtesy he contrived to get a great deal of information out of individual *grandees*. But materials for investigation were scarce. A mystery hung over the pedigrees, which he ascribes to the loose sexual relations caused by the influence of the Moors. He shows, too, that as Moors and Jews used to take the name and arms of their Christian godfathers on being converted, the result was a chaos. Yet he made the most of what was to be learned.

Publicly and privately this embassy was a success. The Duke himself and his second son were made *grandes*—the eldest son received the Golden Fleece. Cardinal Dubois privately did the Duke all the harm he could, and the permanent Minister at Madrid, Maulevrier, was unfriendly. But St. Simon returned with a higher reputation than ever. His public career, however, was now drawing to a close. He had had such a long experience of the weakness of the Regent's character, that, without losing his kindness for him, he kept away from him more and more. They came together again before long, but the Regent's hour was at hand. A poet who was

then living—our Thomson—a writer somewhat unjustly neglected now—tells us that—

—apoplexy cramm'd intemperance knocks  
Down to the ground, at once, as butcher felleth ox.

Such was the fate of Philip of Orleans in the last month of 1723.

St. Simon lived a great many years afterwards, during which he was an observer of affairs only, and principally employed in preparing his *Memoirs*, which close at the Regent's death.\* He went through the labour—a labour of love—of copying the entire MS. in all its extent. He lived, according to the seasons, between the Faubourg St. Germain in Paris and his seat at La Ferté. In 1754 he made his will, which, in a passage breathing the most devoted attachment to the memory of his wife, directs that he shall be buried beside her, and that their two coffins shall be so fastened together with rings, hoops, and bands of iron, that it shall be impossible to separate one from the other without breaking them both. He died at a great age in 1755. His *Memoirs* were taken into the charge of the Government. A few inquirers had access to them, and Madame du Deffand (1770) mentioned them in a letter to Horace Walpole. The first editions published were mere abstracts. It was not till 1829 that an edition approaching to completeness appeared; and that of 1864 lays claim to more fulness and exactness of order. There has been much criticism bestowed on the *Memoirs* on both sides of the Channel—the French being the best—and anecdotes from them fly about the literature of the century. But the British general reader's knowledge of St. Simon is still hazy; his impression of him rather unjust, as second-hand impressions are apt to be; and it is much to be desired, now that France presents so many problems of difficult interest to the world, that a book of this historical importance should be more widely known amongst us.

We have sketched St. Simon's personal career at some length, considering our space, because, without such a sketch, any criticism we have to offer of the *Memoirs* and their author would be vague and impersonal. The reader has already seen what kind of man the Duke was, and what were his opportunities of observation; and the *Memoirs* reflect both, not distantly and indistinctly, as Gibbon is reflected in the *Decline and Fall*, or Robertson in the *Charles the Fifth*, but livingly, humanly, familiarly. The Duke is there before us, an honourable, pious-minded, patriotic man; yet with strong prejudices and a too keen vindictiveness, which last we believe to have been the worst point about him. We confess to liking St. Simon, but on that black point we shall not spare him. He exults over the sufferings of his enemies with a savage glee. His account of the *Lit de Justice*, which humiliated the parliament, and reduced the rank of the bastard princes, has passages recalling the primitive American woods:—

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\* It is possible, but not certain, that a continuation of them, from 1723 to 1743, exists among the Duke's papers which are in the French Foreign Office.

"Towards the third part of the reading, the first president, grinding the few teeth that remained to him, let his forehead rest on his staff, which he held with both hands, and, in this singular and marked posture, listened to the end of a reading, so overwhelming for him, so reviving (*resurrective*) for us. As for myself, I was dying for joy. . . . During the registration, I turned my eyes gently in all directions, and if I constrained them with constancy, I could not resist the temptation of revenging myself on the first president. Insult, scorn, disdain, triumph, were darted at him from my eyes to the very marrow of his bones."

The Duc de Noailles, who had spread a false report about St. Simon, at the time when both were Ministers under the Regent, found no more mercy than the lawyer. He humbled himself before his brother of the sacred order of dukes, in vain. "Execrable perfidy," "monstrous ingratitude," "fearful and profound project," such are among the headings of the chapter in which St. Simon records the guilt and punishment of Noailles:—

"Noailles suffered all, like a culprit crushed under the weight of his crime. The public insults he received from me, without number, did not restrain him. He was never weary of stopping before me, either in entering or leaving the Council, with an extremely marked reverence, nor I of passing right on without saluting him. . . . Twelve years passed in this fashion without any softening on my part."

The reconciliation, at last, was due to the intervention of the women of both families, and of the Cardinal de Noailles, the uncle of the offender, who wished to bring about a marriage between St. Simon's eldest son and a lady of the enemy's house. Even then, St. Simon shrank so much from meeting Noailles, and suffered so much in doing so, that he was on the point when he went home, he tells us, of having himself bled.

This was a dangerous temperament, and we ought not to forget it in reading the *Memoirs*. Yet it is only fair to remember that all was open and above-board in these quarrels of St. Simon's. He always tells us frankly his personal relations to everybody of whom he writes, so that we need never be taken off our guard. And he made war: he did not practise treachery.

If St. Simon's vengeance was a fault, his exaggerated sentiment of aristocracy was a foible. Sometimes it even reduces his satire to nonsense. For instance, in tracing the rise of a certain family to some obscure man's bravery in battle, he says, "*Tous les vilains n'ont pas toujours peur*," as if the courage of Condé or Turenne would have been of any use, if courage had not been plentiful among their followers of all degrees. Never did a hobby take the road so splendidly caparisoned with trappings of *or* and *gules*. A family tracing to the thirteenth century only, is, in St. Simon's eyes, of "very ordinary antiquity." A man without ancestry is "*peu de chose*," sometimes "*fort peu de chose*," sometimes, more simply, "*rien*." Occasionally we hear of a person's coming "*des gentilhommes fort ordinaires*," "*de branche très-cadette*," and so forth. Questions of etiquette



are handled precisely as if etiquette were a science. It would take pages to discuss all the points raised about precedence, salutations, shaking of hands, mourning, bows, *tabourets*, visits, and titles.

Much of this kind of thing is wearisome to people in our generation, and they are apt to forget, first, that to St. Simon it was all inseparably mixed up with political and social questions, and secondly, that he knew the weak side of it all as well as they do. He regarded the nobility of France as kept down by the King, and encroached upon by the lawyers and intendants of provinces; the dukes and peers were the heads of that nobility; and he himself was a duke and peer. Naturally, he wished to do his best for his order, to make it a reality, and cherished accordingly all the still surviving customs, emblems, and ornaments, which were so many proofs and trophies of its old power. This was the serious side of his aristocracy as a doctrine; its comic side as a hobby we have glanced at already; but he who would understand St. Simon must do justice to both. It might seem at first sight as if he were exceptionally fond of titles among his contemporaries, whereas what made him pass for an authority on such subjects was that he treated them with learned accuracy, and reduced them to regular rules. No book contains so much severe criticism of the pretensions of the French nobility to greater things than belonged to them, as the *Memoirs* of St. Simon. He dissects the pretensions of the Rohans, La Rochefoucaulds, La Tours, and La Trémoilles, with the steadiest hand. He ridicules as a mania the assumption of the title of "prince" by families which, however honourable otherwise, had no historic right to it: and what he says of the usurpation of the *de*, and the frequent tendency of the bourgeois to "*marquiser ou comtiser son nom*," is of importance for the history of France. The nobility of that country had been in great part ruined, and in great part swamped, long before its memorable Revolution.

After all, however, the modern reader could hardly desire a better Liberal than our author shows himself to be in some important passages. Mention has been made of the Maréchal de Villeroy, governor of the young King Louis XV. Here is St. Simon's account of a lesson which that teacher gave his royal pupil from the windows of the Tuileries one summer evening in the year 1721. The King had been to Notre Dame and Sainte Geneviève, to return thanks for his recovery from a severe illness:—

"The crowd was such that a pin could not have fallen to the ground in all the *parterre*. The windows of the Tuileries were adorned and filled, and all the roofs of the Carrousel, as well as the Place itself. The Marshal exulted in all this multitude, which disturbed the King, who was every moment hiding himself in corners; the Marshal drew him forth by the arms, and led him sometimes to the windows, from which he saw the Carrousel, and sometimes to those looking on the gardens and their innumerable crowd. Everybody cried *Vive le Roi!* every time he was seen; and the Marshal, holding him every time he wanted to get away, cried too, 'See, then, my master, all this world of people is yours, all belong to



you; you are the master of all; look at them, then, a little to content them, for they are all yours—you are the master of them all.' Beautiful lesson for a ruler, which he was not tired of telling him every time he went to the windows, so afraid was he of his forgetting it! . . . This lesson made a great noise and did him little honour."

We all know, or ought to know, the *Religio Medici* of a good old English writer. St. Simon's Confession of Faith, made à propos of Jansenism under 1711, is a *Religio Patricii*, too enlightened, it would seem, for many a Catholic noble of later times :—

"I hold every party detestable in the Church and in the State. There is no party but that of Jesus Christ. . . . On the other hand, I am closely attached, and still more by conscience than by healthy political views, to what are improperly known under the name of the liberties of the Gallican Church, since those liberties are neither privileges, nor concessions, nor usurpations, nor even liberties by toleration and usage, but the constant practice of the church universal, which that of France has jealously preserved and defended against the enterprises and usurpations of the court of Rome, which have inundated and enslaved all the others, and done by their pretensions an infinite harm to religion. I say the court of Rome, with respect to the bishop of Rome. . . the chief of the church. . . the first bishop. . . as being the vicar of Jesus Christ *par excellence*, that is to say, the chief of all his vicars, who are the bishops. To which I add, that I hold the church of Rome to be the mother and mistress of all the others, with which it is necessary to be in communion; mother, *magistra*, and not *domina*; nor the Pope the only bishop, nor the universal bishop ordinary, and diocesan of all dioceses, nor having alone the episcopal power from which it flows into the other bishops, as the Inquisition, which I hold to be abominable before God, and execrable to men, would make an article of faith. . . . It follows that I am very far from believing the Pope infallible in whatever sense it be taken, nor superior, nor even equal to the œcumenical councils, to which alone it belongs to define articles of faith and to be without error regarding it."

The style of St. Simon is not the strong point of his book. It has not the translucent elegance of the prose of Pascal, nor the vivid decisive clearness of that of Voltaire. Sometimes his narration drags, and he is an unequal writer, whose genius is stronger in observation and generalization than in expression. Like his predecessors, Sully and La Rochefoucauld, he probably disappoints those whose predominant notion about French literature is, that it ought to be lively and smart. His *Memoirs* are essentially serious and historical; he does not gossip for the sake of gossip; and his endless miniature portraits and anecdotes are brought together, not for the sake of comedy, but of the sober illustration of the life of his age. It may startle the reader for a moment if we compare him to Hogarth, but really his art has more of the character of an artist like Hogarth than of an artist like H. B. or Leech. Painting was emphatically his talent, and Sainte-Beuve has well summed-up his merit in a sentence when he

says that "he is the greatest painter of his age, of the age of Louis XIV. in its entire expansion." As a complete picture of a despot and a despotism, nothing equals the *Memoirs*. Tacitus hardly surpasses some of his best touches. And the reign of the "Great Monarch" will never again be the same thing in the eyes of the world that it was before the *Memoirs* came to light. Voltaire's *Siècle* is admirable in its way. No medal struck in Louis's honour during his long reign was a sharper, neater, brighter piece of workmanship. We have said before that the charm of the reign in Voltaire's eyes was as much as anything due to its patronage of the arts. But the royal liberality in this department has been much exaggerated by vague talk. When we look at the figures we find that the expenses of the academies at Paris and Rome, the pensions to men of letters, and the allowance to the observatory, never amounted, at an annual average—all of them together—to more than about half the money lavished upon Marly alone.\* Voltaire's Louis is an elaborate, artificial, court-dress portrait of the King; whereas in St. Simon we have the man in all his phases, whether showy or common-place; a tyrant in his household as in his kingdom; jealous and narrow; a pompous bigwig, full of selfishness and sham-politeness; prude-ridden and priest-ridden; his nose always in the air, yet constantly led by it; a prize mediocrity, starting with everything in his favour, and prosperous while circumstances were good, but quite unequal to the position when opposed by men of real genius. Yet, King Louis thus amply set before us is but one of hundreds of figures in the elaborate drama of St. Simon's *Memoirs*; the scenes in which he appears are few compared with the multitude which they embody.

He gives us likenesses of all kinds, from careful full-lengths in historical oil, such as those of the King and his family, of Fénélon, and others, to keen little pencil-sketches of debauched abbés, broken-down adventurers, old soldiers, demireps of wit, even valets if they come in his way, and illustrate anything or anybody of importance. There are different kinds of this talent in literature; what distinguishes St. Simon's kind is that he gives you the analysis by which he arrives at his result, while he holds up the result before you as a vivid piece of art. He seems, more than most men, great as a painter by dint of being great as an anatomist. Thus, in what Sainte-Beuve calls his "incomparable portrait" of Fénélon, how wonderfully he detects the fine silken thread of courtly ambition running through the saint, yet not spoiling him but leaving him saint still. Clarendon has drawn no character better; Horace Walpole none so well. We shall translate some passages, but to do more is quite beyond the scope of our article:—

"This prelate was a tall, lean man, well made, pale, with a large nose, eyes from which fire and genius flowed like a torrent, and a physiognomy such that I have never seen any that resembled it, and which could not

\* See the figures in the account drawn up by Marinier, *commis des bâtiments* under Colbert, Louvois, and Mansart. (St. Simon, *Mém.* viii. 458.)

be forgotten, though one should only have seen it once. It had something of everything in it, and the contraries were at war. It had gravity and gallantry, seriousness and gaiety; smacked equally of the doctor, the bishop, and the *grand seigneur*; that which was uppermost, as in the whole person, was *finesse*, genius, the graces, becomingness, and, above all, nobleness. It required an effort to cease looking at him. All the portraits of him are speaking ones, without, however, having caught the justice of the harmony which was so striking in the original, and the delicacy of each character that this visage combined in itself. His manners answered to it in the same proportion, with an easiness which communicated itself to others, and the air and the good taste which only come from the best company and the great world, and which shed itself over all his conversations. With that, a gentle, natural, beautiful eloquence—but a man who never wished to have more wit than those to whom he was speaking, who placed himself on everybody's level without letting them see it, who put them at their ease and seemed to enchant, so that people could not quit him, nor defend themselves from him, nor help seeking to meet him again. It was this talent, so rare, and which he had to the last degree, that kept all his friends so entirely attached to him all his life, in spite of his fall, and that, in their dispersion, brought them together to speak of him, to regret him, to desire him, to hold to him more and more, like the Jews to Jerusalem, and to sigh after his return and to hope for it always, as that unhappy people still waits and sighs after the Messias. By this prophetic authority that he had acquired over his followers, he had become accustomed to a dominion which, gentle as it was, did not like resistance. Thus he would not long have been suffered as a companion, if he had returned to the court, and entered in the council, which was always his great object."

A very different type of churchman, Dubois, is brought before us in a few sharp strokes:—"All the vices battled in him as to which should be the master. They made a perpetual noise and combat there. Avarice, debauchery, ambition, were his gods; perfidy, flattery, servility his means; complete impiety his repose; and the opinion that probity and honesty are chimeras in which people array themselves, and which have no reality for anybody, his principle, in consequence of which, to him all means were good."

The talent for describing character was, perhaps, St. Simon's chief literary gift. But it is difficult to decide between it and his cognate gift, for describing what we may call moral scenery. The force with which he puts on the canvas the appearance of the courtiers at Versailles when the death of Monseigneur changed the face of affairs in 1711, has justly been singled out for notice by M. Sainte-Beuve:—

"The greater number of them, that is, the fools, drew sighs from their heels, and with eyes dry and wandering, praised Monseigneur, but always with the same praise, his goodness, and bewailed the king for the loss of so good a son. The cleverest among them, or the most con-

siderable, disquieted themselves already about the king's health; they knew the good sense of preserving so much judgment amidst the trouble, and left no doubt of it by the frequency of their repetitions. Others truly afflicted, and of the cabal thus destroyed, wept bitterly or constrained themselves. Those who already regarded this event as favourable, might well push their gravity to the point of maintaining an austere aspect; it was only a clear veil which did not hinder good eyes from remarking and distinguishing all their traits. These ones held themselves as firm in their place as the most touched, in guard against opinion, against curiosity, against their satisfaction, against their movements; but their eyes made up for the little agitation of their bodies. Changes of posture—a certain care to avoid each other, to avoid even a meeting of the eyes; an indescribable something of freedom in the whole person, notwithstanding the care to be composed—distinguished them in spite of themselves.”

Although it was by no means St. Simon's object to make his book a repertory of good stories, these are naturally scattered over his many volumes, and give a light and pungent seasoning to what is essentially a history of grave importance. To him we owe the anecdote of the old lady of rank (a connection of his own by the way), who, hearing somebody moralize on a wicked grandee just dead, observed that God considered twice before he damned a man of such family. The Duke of Orleans's attempts to raise the devil; the fear of ghosts which made several ladies keep old women to sit up in their bedrooms all night; the downright drunkenness of the half crazy, but pretty and witty Duchess of Berry; the vagaries of the Abbé d'Entraigues, who slept with his arms held up to make his hands white, and had himself bled regularly for the benefit of his interesting complexion; the killing of a gentleman in an orgy by emptying a quantity of Spanish snuff in his wine; the promenading of Samuel Bernard the banker round the King's gardens by Louis himself, with the happiest effects on the financier's purse-strings, are not indeed details of much consequence, but illustrate the character of the time, and are recorded with a polite liveliness in the old French manner. St. Simon lived far into the eighteenth century, but he never ceased to be a man of the seventeenth. He did not take kindly to Voltaire, or his contemporaries; but has always a kind word to say for Madame de Sévigné, La Bruyère, La Fontaine, Boileau, or Bossuet. The range of subjects in which he is at home tempts to discursiveness and quotation. But we must forbear; content, if we shall have assisted to make more popular, a writer sometimes misrepresented, and already more talked of than read, by dwelling for a little on the most interesting points about his character and genius.

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## Mara; or, the Girl without References.

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### I.

SHE was called Mara, and we all of us wondered how a name of such sadness could have been given to a girl so bright, sweet, and tender. But Arthur Halsey, who was in love with her, raved that the name was the softest he had ever heard, and that it was just such a one as he would have chosen to distinguish her from other women, she being peerless.

He would dilate upon her beauty, her gentleness, the winning power of her voice with that meditative ecstasy used by certain art enthusiasts in describing a picture, or by connoisseurs in precious stones, who hold up a diamond in the sunlight and ask you to admire every one of its glittering facets. Men who behave like this are generally great bores. But Halsey was not, for we all of us knew the object of his praise and thought as well of her as he did. If the truth must be told, the fact that he had been the first to declare his love, and the evident strength of her preference for him were, perhaps, the only things that saved us from experiencing for her a passion deep as his own. It is not even so sure that we had escaped her influence; and may be each of us reflected in secret how much lighter the journey of life might be made to him could he set out on it with Mara for his companion.

Yet nobody could tell whence she came, nor what was her parentage; and she was destitute of that commonest buttress to respectability—and to roguery too, for that matter—references. She had arrived one day at the small seaside town of Sandbeach, had taken cheap lodgings, and had given out her name naively as Mara Child, only adding on the inquiry of her landlady that she was Miss, not Mrs. The same day she had gone to Butts's Circulating Library, and had asked Butts in person whether he knew of any family in want of a governess.

Butts was a simpleton of the discursive sort. Besides circulating books he was house agent and proprietor of the *Sandbeach Gazette*. This three-handed title allowed him to keep a finger in the pies of almost all the inhabitants of the town, and had led him up to a vague notion that Sandbeach belonged to him. He wore a velvet skull cap, had a pasty-face with a double chin, and probably meant no harm, though he occasionally did some:—"You have held a governess's situation before, I suppose?" was his magisterial answer to the girl stranger's question, as she stood at the counter of his well-stocked shop.

"No, I have never held any situation," she said quietly.

"Then you have some one who will answer for you; speak to your abilities, I mean, and give you a character?" Butts looked at her as his

plump fingers unstrung a parcel of books just come from London. She was dressed in black, and wore a very white collar and cuffs. It was a plain dress but not poor.

"No," she replied, with a shake of the head. "I am an orphan, and know of nobody who could give me a character."

Butts was both astonished and scandalized:—"The price of a five-line advertisement in the *Sandbeach Gazette* is one and sixpence," said he suspiciously—"half-a-crown for two insertions. The paper appears twice a week."

Mara drew out a little net-work purse and handed him half-a-sovereign: "I think I will have two insertions please," she said. "You can say I am twenty-five years old and am able to draw a little. But I do not play the piano."

Butts rang the coin on the counter, and finding it good, it grieved him to part with so much as seven and sixpence change:—"The subscription to the circulating library and reading-room is half-a-crown a month," he remarked in a half-conciliatory tone. "We take in the *London Magazines* and *The Times*, where you can read of people who want governesses. You have also the privilege of carrying away two books together to read at home."

Mara said she would subscribe; then Butts asked her whether she needed stationery, to which she said no, but bought some drawing pencils and a mill-board. In brief, most of her ten shillings remained in the possession of Butts, who, still suspicious, tied up her purchases in a parcel, and when she had left his shop, ejaculated, "I don't much like the look of her."

We learned all this a few weeks afterwards when Halsey and the other three of us had come up from Oxford to read at Sandbeach during the long vacation. Halsey had just taken his degree and was going to study for the bar; Merry, Clowes, and myself, were still undergraduates, but preparing for the Honour Schools next term, and we had pitched upon Sandbeach as the quietest place on the map. It was not so quiet, however, but that we soon found people made plenty of noise there about their neighbours' concerns; and it must have been on the very morning after our arrival that we were informed by our landlady of this singularly beautiful and odd girl who had come to Sandbeach, hoping to find a situation "*without references*," just as if she thought all the people in these parts were mad-folk, gentlemen! In the course of a week, having become intimate with Butts, he treated us to further details, though we had not asked him to do so. But he was full of his subject and so were all the other Sandbeachers; this event being the nearest approach to a scandal with which the town had ever been favoured. It seemed that two families had answered Miss Child's advertisement, but they had been able to elicit nothing satisfactory as to her antecedents, and so, of course, had receded. All Miss Child would say was, that her mother was dead, and that she had never known her father, who had deserted her mother years



ago. At first her mother had seemed in easy circumstances, afterwards they had become very poor, and had been obliged to work with their needles for their living. How long was it since her mother had died? Six years. And what had she—Miss Child—done since? Worked. Where? This she refused to say, and she would neither state where her mother had lived, nor how it came that she herself, after being reduced to live by needlework, was suddenly in a position to apply for a place as governess. To the last inquiry she had simply answered that she had met with some people “who had been good to her.”

All this was extremely suspicious. Butts appeared to consider it a premeditated affront upon Sandbeach that any one should come there not prepared to give the fullest account, in print if need were, of his or her life from birthday upwards. He doubted whether he was justified in letting her subscribe to his library, and take home books which would afterwards pass into the immaculate hands of visitors having references. To be sure she seldom came now to his reading-room to look at *The Times*’ advertisements as she had done at first. The lady subscribers had stared her out of countenance, observed a chilling silence in her presence, drawn their skirts hastily away to avoid her contact as she passed, and done other things that were most natural and proper under the circumstances. But now and then she would come to bring back books and borrow others; and a few days ago, added Butts, she had glided in timidly at nightfall, and brought him a dozen water-colour sketches, asking him whether he saw any hope of selling them. He had kept the sketches out of curiosity and shown them to some of his lady subscribers, who had been much amused at the girl’s impudence. Naturally he had not been able to sell any, nor was he sure that he would consent to do so, even had the chance occurred; for one should never encourage people whom one does not know. This is what Butts said.

We were lounging over the counter, cutting the leaves of new magazines, skimming through the papers, and inspecting the library catalogues.

“Let us see the sketches, Butts,” asked Halsey, who, like the rest of us, had from the outset of his acquaintanceship with the Sandbeach magnate discarded the name “Mr.” as superfluous.

“As the women are making such a dead set at the girl it is obvious she is pretty,” remarked Merry, whose character was, contrary to the usual rule, not out of keeping with his name. “I even suspect that, since our friend Butts talks so lightly of the sketches, there must be some merit in them.”

But no, there was no merit in them whatever, except such as comes from patient work misapplied. Butts, who was quite impervious to sarcasm from not understanding what it meant, produced the sketches out of a drawer, and laid them before us with a kind of expostulatory shrug. They were views of Sandbeach and neighbourhood, the sea by day and by moonlight, and displayed only the most elementary knowledge of colouring. Poor, simple drawings they were, with dabs of blue



for sky, grey for sea, and brown for shingle. It was school-girl art, not so bad as to be absurd ; not good enough to be worth a glance. Merry, Clowes, and I threw a look over them and no more. Clowes, who was a bit of a cynic, even said something tart about teaching girls to waste paper and colours instead of instructing them to bake and spin. But Halsey collected the sketches, and, after going through them cursorily, began to pore over them one by one, with deep attention, as if there were beauties in them which he had failed to discover, but which were visible to him. When he reached the last he held it almost five minutes before his eyes, then, like a good fellow as he was, with a manly sympathy for all that was weak and suffering, he exclaimed, "Poor little thing ! Imagine a girl trying to hire herself out to teach her poor scraps of knowledge, and being rebuffed everywhere because there is a miserable secret in her young life which she wishes to conceal. Perhaps it is her mother's or her father's honour which she is endeavouring to cloak. But Butts there and his lady patrons don't choose to perceive that, if this pretty girl had vicious instincts, she need never have troubled any of them for a place or money. They ban her—the ladies by pursing up their lips when she crosses them, the chaste Butts by preaching her down from behind his counter, and musing as to whether he shall let her beguile her evenings by reading one of his books which she has paid for. Then she falls back upon these attempts to earn her bread, and Butts puts them in a drawer vowing not to sell them, lest he should encourage immorality. Well, one day when she has exhausted all the methods she knows for keeping starvation away, she will find herself, thanks to Butts and his ladies, with a choice of three roads before her : theft, dishonour, or suicide. If she takes to the first road Butts, will be there under the coat of a policeman and with handcuffs in his pocket. If she selects the second course, Butts will proclaim that he foresaw it all along. If she flings herself into the sea we shall have Butts wanting to bury her in the felons' corner of the churchyard, with a verdict of self-murder. Isn't that about it, Butts ?"

Butts, who was quite impenetrable to the notion that anybody should think of poking irony at him did not seize a word of this, and answered complacently : "They're silly daubs, aren't they ?"

"Nevertheless, I shall buy them, Butts," answered Halsey. "What is their price ?"

"Oh," said Butts, who would have smiled had nature endowed him with a capacity for doing so, "sixpence a-piece would be a deal of money for such things as them, I should say."

"How do you rate the worth of labour, Butts ?" muttered Halsey, still considering the sketches. "Each of these drawings must have taken a day and a half to execute. Supposing anybody were to set you working for a day and a half, then give you sixpence and call it a deal of money ?"

"The wages of a male artisan average between three shillings a-day and ten ; those of a woman between ninepence and five shillings," replied Butts, who always took questions gravely.

"And it must be skilled labour to earn the money," took up Clowes, who, although an excellent fellow, was for uprooting sentimentalism. "Don't let us have any paradoxes, Halsey. You pay work if it's good: if not, you give nothing."

"That's your theory, Clowes; but supposing we generalized it and paid professional men only for the *good* work they did, what would become of most novelists, barristers, and cabinet ministers, to say nothing of the clergy? I'll rate the drawings according to their industry, and according to my own means, at seven-and-six each, Butts, or let us say a fiver for the lot," and putting the unknown girl's pictures together, Arthur Halsey handed the Sandbeach censor a bank-note.

I suppose the money could not have lain ten seconds in Butts's hesitating palm when the shop-door turned, and admitted a girl, at whose sight Merry, Clowes, and I, who had begun to banter Halsey on his quixotism, instantly lapsed silent; for it needed no one to tell us that here was the very person we were discussing,—come as if to speak mutely for herself, as to her deserts, her sadness, and her destitution. She was surprisingly lovely, but pale; and her beauty was of that frail, infant-like sort, which has astonished eyes, deep, and mysterious as velvet, the tiniest of mouths, and timid candour spread over all the features like a bloom. There was nothing in her dress to mark absolute penury, only her ways displayed some of that weariness which resulted from the struggle against a current too strong for her young arms.

She coloured as she entered, but less because of us than because of two smart young ladies, Miss Ida, and Miss Ada Wilkins, who had come in with her. They somehow generally contrived to be at Butts's, these pretty and proper Misses Wilkins at the hour when Merry and Clowes were there, and virtue-like, they forthwith began to stare at the strange girl in black, whose name they knew, as if they suspected her of shop-lifting.

Mara Child laid some books on the counter, and began to speak in a low tone to Butts. But Butts, amongst his other qualities, possessed that of being slightly deaf, so with her face flushing deeper at this necessity, the girl was obliged to raise her voice so that we all heard what she said:

"I have brought back these books," she faltered, "and—and—as it is the end of the month, Mr. Butts, I don't think I shall renew my subscription. And please would you insert this twice in the *Sandbeach Gazette*." (She was crimson by this time, and drew a slip of paper with a half-crown, from her pocket,) it is another advertisement; but not for a governess's place."

Butts being a simpleton in all things, small as well as great, unfolded the paper, scrutinized it as if it were a passport, and read its contents pompously aloud: "'Wanted, some work by a needlewoman, who can embroider, and make dresses. The advertiser would work cheaply, and as many hours a day as desired. Address: M. C., Circulating Library, Sandbeach.'"

The Misses Wilkins tittered, and from that unlucky moment were banished for ever from the affections of both Clowes and Merry—Halsey had covered his sketches with a newspaper, and pretended to be examining an album, but his eyes glancing over its edges were fastened on Mara, and, on hearing the Misses Wilkins tinkle out their scorn, he reddened as if he had been struck.

Butts had heard the titter, and he answered with a frown : “ Oh no, I cannot let any more letters be addressed to you here. You must have them sent to your lodgings. But—” (and it was evident these words cost him an effort as if he were being constrained to do a menial office,) “ but this five-pound note is yours,—one of those gentlemen has just bought all your drawings.”

Butts did not say which gentleman, but I remember as if it were to-day, her turning round with the note in her hands and looking at us. She gazed first at me, then her eyes rested upon Halsey, and such an expression of wistful gratitude rose to her face, that if I had been in Halsey's place I should have fancied she was speaking to me, and I should have answered her. But Halsey did not speak ; nor did she. Her thanks were all given with the eyes, and the reply to the thanks was conveyed in the same manner—that is at one glance.

## II.

This was how their love affair had begun. After this they saw each other frequently, then daily, and Halsey took an early opportunity of apprising Butts that he had better show himself reserved in talking about Miss Child. This was not cautious. Butts, who could no more comprehend a threat than he could a joke, discoursed more than ever about the girl, her advertisements, and her water-colours ; and it soon became hinted from one end of Sandbeach to the other, that the designing adventuress (certain others said : “ the minx,” or “ the creature,”) had formed an improper connection with the most bearded of the four Oxonians who were staying at No. 3 on the Parade.

It is a curious symptom, by the way, that alacrity with which moral people jump at the idea of an improper connection. One would really think that certain moralizers did nothing but muse upon improprieties from the rising of the sun till the return of the same next day.

There was in truth no impropriety between Mara and Halsey. A day or two after the little episode at Butts's he accosted her on the beach ; and breaking through the conventionalities which are very well between people who do not know each other, and do not much care to do, but which are absurd when hearts are already more than half united, he told her frankly that he had heard she was seeking employment, and offered to assist and serve her by every means in his power. She thanked him, but probably both felt in that moment that if he ever placed her beyond reach of want and care it would not be by procuring her a situation as a governess, as a dressmaker, or even as an artist.

From that time their love was not a thing which either sought to

conceal from the other; and soon he fell into the habit of meeting her every day on the beach. He deserted his books, took long rambles with her by the sea-side, returned, said good-bye to her at her door, and passed all his evening in recounting her praises to us. We smoked, nodded, and listened. Then he introduced us all three to her. She blushed on first presentation, but we soon became good friends, for there was no affectation in her nature. She was artless, gentle, and, when amused, would laugh so innocently and sweetly, that we regretted her habitual mood should be one of pensiveness, and rather sad pensiveness. At her request we often joined her and Halsey in their walks on the beach; and one day the good idea occurred to one amongst us to charter a sailing-boat and go a series of coasting trips and picnics to places of interest in the neighbourhood. She was not afraid of the sea, and liked these expeditions; but the first time we set out on a sunny morning with our boat fresh painted and sails new bleached,—when we men in our jerseys and straw hats marched down to the beach carrying a hamper between us, and installed Mara on a throne-like pile of scarlet rugs in the stern,—when, above all, on putting out, Merry broke out into one of Tom Dibdin's songs, in the chorus of which her pure, bright voice was soon heard to join; then there was a pretty to-do indeed, in Sandbeach. It so happened that for that very day, and under plea of a prior engagement, we had refused an invitation to a croquet party where Miss Ada and Miss Ida Wilkins were to shine; and the fiat thereon went forth from one end of the town to the other that "the minx," had formed an improper connection, not with one amongst us only, but with all four. God bless us all in this island for the charity we bear our neighbours!

A few annoying consequences now began to crop up. There is certainly not an inhabited country, save this one, where a man—by which I mean a male—even when he has attained to Butts's age and virtuous insensibility, could bear to speak otherwise than with gallantry of a woman so lovely and defenceless as Mara? But Butts, who kept no gallantry in stock except for Mrs. Butts—who probably exacted it as tribute without leaving it to his option—and for such lady customers as subscribed to his rooms, bought stationery of him, and had references—Butts babbled about Mara as if he were one fish-fag and she another. The Rev. Joel Grones, the pastor of the Jumper Chapel, taking his cue from Butts, warned our landlady, who jumped under his guidance on the road to salvation, that our conduct was becoming a stumbling-block and an occasion for offence. The Anglican rector, who had called on us on our arrival, and introduced us to some of the local tea-tables, looked severely at us over his prayer-book when he walked up his church one Sunday, and, during the whole service, seemed to be deliberating whether he should write to the dean of our college, or remonstrate with us after the sermon in the vestry. He took the third course of coming to No. 3 on the Parade whilst we were at dinner, and dwelling apologetically on the shock our behaviour was causing to all sensitive Sandbeachers. It is to be noted that we had

never done a thing which ought by rights to have shocked a soul not pre-disposed to cry "Shocking!" We were strangers to the town, and quite old enough to take care of ourselves. If it shocked people to see us go out sailing with an unchaperoned young lady, all they had to do was to shut their eyes, and not talk of the grievous sight. But no; the morals of the Sandbeachers demanded that our own morals should be impugned; that we should be whispered about under the church-porch, and anathematized over tea and muffins. It was only after an exasperating piece of vigour on the part of Merry that the conversation about Mara and us grew a little more guarded.

Being in Butts's reading-room one day, he heard a Sandbeach quid-nunc—one, curly-haired Snigge, son of Snigge and Snigge, attorneys—crack a pleasantry of the Sniggish sort concerning Mara. He strode up to him, and gave him a slap on the face which sent him reeling over a cane chair, and then under it. Merry was a muscular Christian, and his slap must have sounded uncomfortably to a few in the room who had often earned quite as good a title to it as young Snigge, if Merry had only been present to hear and reward them.

But what was to come of all this? If Halsey had been not necessarily a libertine, but one holding French views of life, his love for Mara would have led to the same results as do ten thousand similar *liaisons* every year; but Halsey's passion for the girl was too deep for the project of ruining her to cross his head. One of those cool-headed virgins who bring actions for breach of promise he might have laid siege to without scruple, being neither better nor worse than most young men of his age. But Mara excited in one all the instincts of protection. She was so good, guileless, and confiding, that a man felt the wish to shield her and keep her from harm's way;—to seduce her would have seemed more than usually heartless and brutal. When their acquaintance was but a very few days old it was easy to see that Halsey had already resolved to marry the girl. He was of age, had taken his degree, and would be independent of his profession, having 600*l.* a year of his own. This was enough for comfort, and could be accounted wealth by living abroad. On the other hand, Halsey had parents very well connected, and aspiring to see him do great things in life. It was not to be expected they would give their consent to his marriage with a girl in Mara's equivocal position; indeed, it was certain they would endeavour to thwart such a match by all the means their alarm and indignation could suggest. It was this that worried Halsey. Week after week passed, and he had not yet proposed to Mara, nor had she, on her side, given him or us the slightest clue to her history. She never talked of the past—never alluded to it by the slightest reference to people she had known, events she had witnessed, or places she had visited. Yet she did not appear to be acting with a settled purpose at concealment. Had she just recovered from a terrible fever, which had obliterated all the pictures in her memory, she could not have acted otherwise than she was doing.

When a man is placed in such circumstances and has three friends at hand, he is generally favoured with triple-tongued advice of the most impressive sort about the rashness of committing himself, the folly of hasty marriages, and so on. Halsey got no such advice from us—not even from Clowes, who was never averse to showing one the seamy side of schemes. Each of us well knew that had it been his luck to be loved by Mara as Halsey was loved, he would have overridden all the scruples, cautions, and relatives in the world; and, this being so, we should have considered it uncandid to tender counsels we ourselves should never have followed. Therefore, when one August evening Halsey came in and told us quietly that the matter was settled—that Mara had agreed to be his wife, and that he would push on the marriage as promptly as possible—we regarded the conclusion as natural and fitting, and held out our hands in congratulation.

We had all—Mara included—been out for a sail that afternoon, and on landing Halsey had, as usual, been left to accompany Mara to her door. From various indications—of which a greater timidity than ordinary on Mara's part was chief—we had guessed that a consummation was imminent, and on our return we had not waited dinner for Halsey. He came back later, however, than we had expected. It was nearly ten o'clock, and he found us leaning out of our bow-window which fronted the sea, and smoking. He took a seat after we had shaken hands with him, asked for water, drank off two glasses, and then, by the moon's light which shone on his face, we saw that he was pale and looked excited. Here let it be said that Halsey was nearly six feet high, and proportionately strong. He had a mass of brown hair, and a precocious beard luxuriant and golden; but he was not a slouchy kind of giant, one of those rough, human Newfoundlands. He was, on the contrary, very careful about his dress, and not slovenly or lazy in his conversation. Talk about business, book-work, or sport, drew out all the shrewdness in him; but in matters where the heart was involved, he acted impulsively as an Italian.

"Yes, we must get the marriage over at once," he exclaimed, abruptly, after he had been silently stroking his forehead a minute or two. "There is no chance of my people ever consenting, so I shall go up to town to-morrow for a licence, and make the rector marry us on Thursday."

"Is there really no hope with your people?" asked Clowes. Clowes was slight, dark, and deliberate. If he had been in Halsey's case, he would have married Mara without hesitation; but he would have asked his parents' leave for form's sake. He was going to be a clergyman.

"Yes, it's as well to give one's people fair play," suggested Merry, drawing his cigar from his lips. "I wouldn't listen to them if they made objections; but you know how much better women like it when they can be married without secrecy, with friends, bridesmaids, and all that sort of thing."

"If I could marry her before all England, and with twenty bishops



behind the altar-rails, I would do it," exclaimed Halsey, vehemently. "Do you think it doesn't wring my heart to marry the little thing as if I were ashamed of it? But what is the use of bringing all my people down on her to persecute her and make her miserable. You fellows know Mara, from the first day you heard of her coming innocently to a strange place, and trying to get a situation without having any recommendation to offer but her own truthful face and honest voice,—from that first day you felt there could be no harm in the girl, and when you set eyes on her she seemed to you an angel, which she is. But what is the use of trying to prove to my people that. They would bully me and her, and if I told them her history they would think me mad for believing it."

He continued for a time more in this strain, and then confided us Mara's history, which she had told him that afternoon, "crying," said he, "as if her little heart would break, and hiding her face in her hands, as if it were a crime she were confessing to." Mara's mother had never been married. She had been a sempstress, and when deserted by her seducer, who had kept her for some years in comfort, she had resumed her old calling, and supported herself and her child by her needle. By and by Mara had been able to earn her living by her needle too; but, at her mother's death, a rich family—perhaps related to her father—had taken her under their protection, finished her education, and given her a comfortable home under their roof. She remained with them until she discovered that the master of the house, whose wife was her chief benefactress, and who was himself an honourable man and father of a family, was in love with her. Then foreseeing that if she stayed, she could only be a cause of sorrow and disgrace, she had fled, leaving a note behind her to say that she would never return, because she had been unhappy in the house, and was going to seek a home elsewhere. "They had been kinder to me than if I had been their child," was her grateful acknowledgment; "but I thought that if I made myself out to be thankless and wicked, they would not endeavour to follow me." So she had come to Sandbeach, not knowing the town, but thinking that from its loneliness it would be a good place to hide in. She had ten pounds when she arrived—the savings of her pocket-money, and she had hoped, in her ignorance of the ways of the world, that she could obtain a situation by simply saying that she was willing to work. How soon she had been disappointed we knew, but Halsey had met her just in time to save her from grinding want. Since then she had been living on the proceeds of her sketches. She painted three or four of them a week, and for each Halsey gave her a sovereign, saying he knew a dealer in London who sold them. Being unimaginative, she had never doubted this was a fact. Such was the simple history of Mara, as Halsey told it us.

Looking back upon that time it strikes me as a symptom of the enthralling fascination Mara had exercised over us all, that we all accepted her account of herself as if it had been gospel. There were no questions and no doubting; yet we were not, I believe, fools. On the



morrow Halsey started early for London to get his licence, and by the following train Merry went there too under commission from Clowes and I to buy Mara a wedding present in our three joint names. By clubbing our resources we had lumped some sixty pounds, and Merry brought back the same evening a watch and chain, a bracelet, and a pair of earrings all tasteful and well made. Halsey also returned about the same time with his license and a trousseau that had cost him a hundred pounds. He went off at once to Mara's and brought her back to take tea with us, the landlady being invited up for the occasion to play propriety. Mara found her presents on her plate in the place of honour at the head of the table, and I fancy I can see Halsey now fastening the earrings to her tiny ears, then turning round to us with his eyes moist and saying: "What good fellows you all are, and what a lucky dog I am to have such a wife and such friends!"

The presents drew a little colour to Mara's pale cheeks, for she was extremely pale, and it escaped none of us that she wore an abstracted dreamy expression which we had noticed on her face before, but which now seemed settled there. We attributed this to natural emotion. Later, however, I remembered an episode of that evening to which we none of us attached much importance at the time, though it seems to have rather struck Clowes, who was the most observant of us. When the tea-things were cleared away Halsey asked if there were anything in that day's paper. Our landlady, who read her newspaper religiously from end to end, advertisements included, answered: "Oh yes, Mr. Halsey, the shockingest murder in the world; a policeman killed in London with a poker. There's a column of particulars most dreadful to think of." Lifting my eyes at that moment I saw that Mara's face had grown livid. Her eyes were haggardly fixed on the speaker, and her lips parted as if in abject terror. Seeing me looking at her, she endeavoured to recover herself, and put up her hands before her eyes, but a moan broke from her lips and her head fell back senseless. All of us rose in alarm, the window was opened, salts were fetched, and Halsey, falling on his knees, chafed her hands distractedly between his; but as she was soon restored to consciousness the incident was ascribed to the heat, which had, in truth, been oppressive that day.

The next morning Halsey took his license to the rector, and on the day following the wedding came off. One need scarcely describe the commotion spread throughout Sandbeach by the event. Although the rector had been given but four and twenty hours notice this was quite enough to let the news circulate in every nook of the town, and at the hour appointed for the ceremony not a pew in the small parish church but was crowded, whilst the concourse outside would have given one to suppose that every spectator had a deep personal interest in what was going on. The Misses Wilkins were there with their hair down their backs, fresh and still wet from sea-bathing; young Snigge was there with the female Snigge connection, prying and excited; Mrs. Butts was there

and the entire clan of Butts's lady subscribers mustered to a woman, chattering, whispering, and talking in all the coigns of vantage. But the wedding was not quite the thing some of these good Samaritans had foreseen. The rector was a worthy man, and after scanning Halsey's license he had said: "A gentleman in your position, Mr. Halsey, would not do anything to disgrace his family name, so I conclude that your intended bride is in every respect worthy of you." And on Halsey replying with a powerful adjuration which would have exploded into an oath but for the ecclesiastical presence, that his bride was the purest woman in all Christendom the rector had proceeded: "Well, if the young lady has no relatives to assist her my wife shall lead her to church, and perhaps you will let the wedding breakfast take place at the rectory." Accordingly, when Mara stood at the altar railings she had the rector's excellent wife in a grey silk dress behind her. Clowes gave her away, I was acting as best man, and Merry kept an eye to the marshalling of six little national-school girls in white dresses and with crowns of rose-buds in their hair, whom Halsey and the rector's wife had arranged together should act as bridesmaids. Mara was exquisitely dressed in white silk, and wore a bonnet trimmed with orange blossoms. Her beauty, her bashfulness and the tranquil innocence that seemed to clothe her stirred a murmur of admiration as she descended the aisle on Halsey's arm, and such of the congregation as had not been moved to indulgence by seeing the countenance which the rector's wife lent to the wedding were shaken in their prejudices by the pride and admiring love with which Halsey appeared to regard his bride. These were not the looks of a man putting the finishing touch to an "improper connection." The ladies, with woman's unerring connoisseurship in such matters, felt it; and Mara, who entered the church as an outcast, left it almost popular. There were carriages outside, with postilions and favours, just as if the marriage had been in London; but as the first of these carriages drove off with Halsey, his bride and the rector's wife for the parsonage I heard a woman say: "It's a fair and harmless face, but she looks as if her mind were not with her body. She seems thinking of something else."

### III.

Three years passed. After we had taken our degrees Merry, Clowes and I were scattered each to our vocations. Clowes took root in a Northern vicarage, Merry went to grow mangels on his estate, and myself finished eating my terms at Lincoln's Inn, and was called to the Bar. I frequently saw Halsey, who lived in London. His family had been slow to forgive his marriage, but he had a sister who was fond of him, and an ally of this kind ends by removing even such mountains as family pride. She had brought the rest of the Halsey household first to extend pardon to Arthur personally, then to call on his wife, and lastly to admit that the latter was not vulgar or odious, indeed was inoffensive. The concession went no further than this, perhaps because Mara did not evince any wish to

penetrate into her husband's family. Halsey's sister, who was married, often called upon her, and seemed disposed to strike up an intimacy with, and pet her. Mara showed herself grateful for these attentions; but she had grown more reserved since her marriage than before it. She was sweet, kind and amiable with all her husband's friends, but she made no efforts to widen her circle of acquaintances, and she never went into Society.

This afflicted Halsey, who would have liked to take her everywhere, and glory in her beauty; but doubtless his home was all the happier for Mara devoting her whole mind and heart to it. It was certainly the happiest home a man could have pictured to himself even in a dream. A year after their marriage a child—a baby Mara—had been born to them, and the young mother's life was wholly abandoned to the two beings she loved best on earth. A wish of her husband's was law to her; his comfort the aim of her every waking thought. Arthur was called to the Bar but did not practise, having by family interest obtained a post under Government which kept him absent several hours every day. But when he returned home he was sure to find every day the same tender smile of welcome on Mara's face, the same mother-taught crow of love on the lips of his child; so that sometimes he would exclaim half laughing, half seriously: "What have I done to be so happy?"

If he said this in his wife's presence, as he often did, she would turn to him and answer softly: "If you are really happy, Arthur dear, you deserve it all for the happiness you have given me."

"But do you know I get to fancy I have taken somebody else's share of happiness as well as my own. Providence must have made a mistake, and there is some poor devil walking about wondering what has become of the lot of bliss intended for him, and misappropriated by me." He said this, smiling, one winter evening as he met me on the steps of our club, and he invited me to accompany him home to dinner, adding that Mara had not seen me for a month, and would treat it as a pleasant surprise. His spirits overflowed, and as contented men generally like to see the reflex of their prosperity on others, he said, with abrupt kindness: "But, by the way, let's talk about yourself. You've no briefs yet? Well, I think I can promise you one that may lead to others. Houillier, one of the coal people whose mines have got into the Common Pleas, was telling me to-day he wished he could get hold of a studious, pushing junior who would really read up his case. Those whom his solicitor has recommended him are muffs, cousins of the solicitor, of course. So I mentioned you and he booked it."

Poor fellow, he little guessed, no more did I, how soon I should be holding a brief upon which vital concerns of his own, not coal interests, would depend!

He lived in a pleasant house out Kensington way, and we drove there in a cab. Cheeriness and comfort greeted us from the threshold. A well-brushed page opened the door, a bright fire was glowing in the

dining-room, where a table shining with glass and silver was laid for two ; and a thick crimson carpet muffled the staircase leading to the drawing-room which might well have satisfied a richer man from its elegant furniture and coziness. Mara had gone out shopping, so the page stated, and was not yet returned, but there was work of hers with a basketfull of gay-coloured worsted balls on the small table at which she usually sat near the fire-screen ; and on a handsome piano, which was open, lay pieces of new music.

"See that," said Halsey, resting a hand on my shoulder. "Do you remember that advertisement Mara put into the paper at Sandbeach three years ago, saying she could not play the piano ? Well, she can now. I had bought that with the rest of the furniture, thinking we might occasionally give parties ; and, knowing I liked music, she engaged a music mistress to give her lessons every morning unawares to me. The other night, after dinner, she told me to shut my eyes, and then she sank down and played the tunes she had heard me praise." He turned and brushed something away from his eyes when he had said this, then rang for the nurse to bring down baby Mara, who was led in toddling, and with a finger in her mouth. He caught her up and covered her rosy cheeks with kisses, then passed her on to me to do likewise, and said : "Why don't you marry, too, and set up an imitation of this. What comparison is there between this life I am leading here, and that club-and-chambers' existence I should have been dragging on with you fellows if I had not met Mara ?"

I was reflecting just the same thing. When should I be in a position to marry, like Halsey, and feel that other lives and happinesses were entwined with mine ? Not probably till I was past middle age, and unable to exist in my home with the same force and freshness as Halsey did in his. At the best I should be wedded to some one much younger than myself, and there could never be between us that full communion of spirit which comes from a parity of ages, and consequently of hopes. I had reached this point, and was seated near the fire holding baby Mara on my knees, when the clock on the mantelpiece struck seven.

"It's strange," exclaimed Halsey, without alarm, but astonished as he compared his watch with the clock. "We dine at seven, and Mara is never so late as this."

We continued to chat and play with the baby, but at a quarter past seven our remarks began to flag, and Halsey rang to ask the page whether his mistress had not left word that she would be home later than usual ? No, was the answer. Mrs. Halsey had gone out at about half-past four, telling Susan, the maid, that she had worsteds to match, and a few other things to buy, but she would be back very shortly. I hazarded a few reassuring conjectures, which whiled away the next ten minutes, but at the half-hour Halsey's anxiety became intolerable, and he rang again, but for the maid this time, to inquire of her what her mistress's exact words had been. The maid repeated all the page had said, but added that her

mistress had mentioned having mislaid her watch-key, and being obliged to go to a watchmaker's to buy another. She had just pronounced these words, when there was a ring at the street-door. It was a sharp ring, unaccompanied by a knock. The maid went down and answered it. We sat looking at each other apprehensively. In a minute the maid returned with a startled countenance to say that a policeman wished to speak to Mr. Halsey.

A policeman is seldom the bearer of good tidings. We both rose together, Halsey white as a sheet, and I instinctively clasping his child closer to me. When the policeman was shown up, we must have offered a singular picture—Halsey half way towards the door, and looking as if he were afraid to advance to meet the coming news; I with uneasy inquiry in my attitude. The child, unconscious of our emotions, was playing with my neck-tie.

The policeman was a strong, honest-faced man, who removed his helmet on entering, and looking at both of us said, "Mr. Halsey?" Then he paused a moment, evidently not prepared for the signs of comfort and even of luxury which he saw. He coughed, and changed the key of his voice: "I'm sorry to say, sir, there's a lady in trouble at our station. She was brought in custody an hour ago, on a charge of shoplifting at a jeweller's, and refused to give her name. When she was searched, however, they found cards and letters addressed Mrs. Halsey, and she admits the name's hers."

Halsey made a step forward: "MY—WIFE—CHARGED—WITH—SHOPLIFTING!"

Every word was separated from the next by a cavernous gasp, and the voice grated in an accent unknown to me. I put the child down on the sofa, and with cold moisture bedewing my own forehead, approached Halsey, thinking his next movement would be to spring at the policeman, and fell him where he stood.

The policeman was not daunted, but appeared touched: "It's best in these cases, sir, to be told the worst at once. I'm afraid there's no mistake here. The three diamond rings was found in the lady's pocket."

#### IV.

I cannot describe how we went down to the police-station, for of all the events of that hideous night, this is the only episode which has left no trace in my memory. We seemed to have flown to the station. It was a place of the usual chilly, depressing sort. White-washed walls, forms fastened to these walls by iron clamps, a wicket door leading to the cells, and a railed-off space, behind which sat an inspector having a desk before him, and behind him a fire-place, over the shelf of which hung handcuffs and a truncheon, in guise of ornaments. The whole place was pervaded by that odour which is diffused by the blue cloth dye of policemen's tunics. The inspector was quiet and respectful. On finding he had gentlemen to do with, he appeared to set light store by the charge. He

did not consider his prisoner innocent, but he seemed to think it a matter of course that the charge should be withdrawn, and he opposed no difficulty whatever to Halsey's seeing his wife, who had not been placed in a cell, but in a private room of the inspector's own, pending information about her. I, of course, left Halsey to go alone; and when the inspector had returned, I questioned him about the charge. It was then I discovered for the first time how much deeper than mere friendship were my feelings for Mara, since all the inspector said was powerless to shake, even for a single moment, my faith in her guiltlessness.

The facts were these: Mrs. Halsey had gone to a jeweller's to whom she was unknown, and had asked for a key to her watch. Seeing she looked "respectable," the jeweller had, whilst fitting the keys, begged her to examine a tray of rings. At this juncture came in a woman poorly dressed, presumably a confederate, who requested to be shown a cheap eight-day clock, and then said something in a low voice to Mrs. Halsey, who answered her. The jeweller, not liking the appearance of the second customer, put down the watch-keys he was holding, and at once lifted down the eight-day clock, keeping his eyes sharply fixed on the woman as he did so. She reddened, made some excuse about the clock being too large, and without waiting to be shown another, hastily left the shop. Then the jeweller said to Mrs. Halsey, "I think we're well rid of her, ma'am: she seemed up to no good." To which Mrs. Halsey replied, "I saw no harm in her," or words to that effect. The jeweller was surprised, but added nothing. Mrs. Halsey paid for her watch-key and went out. Then the jeweller, on inspecting his ring-tray, perceived that three valuable diamond rings had been abstracted. He ran after Mara, overtook her, gave her in charge to a policeman, and had her led back to his shop where the pocket of her dress was searched, and the three rings found in it.

This is what the inspector said, and the policeman who had arrested Mara—not the one who had called to tell us of her arrest—described the finding of the rings, "just at the top of the packet, lying on the handkerchief." According to him—a policeman of the emphatically speculative and dull sort—it was proof conclusive of his prisoner's guilt, that though she had shown herself "cool and brazen enough" when first taxed with the theft, she no sooner saw the rings drawn from her pocket than she clasped her hands in frenzy, and implored the jeweller not to proceed against her. She said she would buy the rings and give him money besides. She behaved like a mad thing, and ended by throwing herself on her knees and crying that she was innocent, and that she had not put the rings there, and that if he prosecuted her he would never forgive himself for the calamities he had caused. The jeweller answered this by asking her whether she knew the other woman who had come into the shop. At first she refused to reply, but on being pressed and told that if she made a clean breast of it, she might perhaps be forgiven; she acknowledged that she did know the woman, but could say nothing about her.



By "couldn't," she clearly meant "wouldn't," so the jeweller said it was plain they were confederates, and had her locked up.

The inspector inquired whether the lady was a sister of mine. On my negative gesture, he remarked drily that cases of this sort were frequent, though so few of them were made public. It was kleptomania. Some ladies could not resist the temptation of jewellery. They were not thieves in other respects ; but they stole, like magpies, because of the glitter, and did not appear to understand the wrong of it until they got into trouble of this sort.

At this moment Halsey returned. He was wan and looked as if he had aged ten years in two hours. But he was collected :—"This is some horrible mistake," he said, drawing me aside. "I thought at first Mara might have taken up the rings to examine them and put them in her pocket, without thinking of what she was doing. She has not been quite herself of late. You recollect that absent nervous look that fell on her about the time of our marriage. It disappeared afterwards, but now I call it to mind, her manner during the past fortnight has been something like what it was then ; and people in absent moods, you know, will do the strangest things. But Mara has no recollection of having touched the jewellery, and she cannot conjecture how the rings came into her pocket. This might be accounted for, however, by her commotion of mind after that inhuman tradesman's conduct. Go and see the fellow—will you ? I could not trust myself to speak calmly to him. Tell him that everything will be made right. We will buy the rings if he likes. Explain that Mara is in delicate health—critically delicate ; and bring him back with you at once to withdraw the charge. I shall, of course, wait by Mara till you return. I will try and get her to sleep."

I set off at once for the jeweller's, who was one Mowleson, a much-respected man, as the inspector told me. My view of all this frightful business was Halsey's. I was convinced that Mara had unconsciously taken up the rings and dropped them into her pocket in one of her abstracted moments. So the woman who had entered the shop and spoken to her, I was sure she must be simply a beggar, and that her suspicious looks, her seeming acquaintanceship with Mara, and the other suppositions about her, were so many phantoms of the policeman's and the jeweller's brains. The streets were carpeted with a December frost as I walked ; and though it was nine, and I had not eaten since midday, I did not feel hunger. I was for getting the matter concluded out of hand that Mara might return to her home and her child. But I had reckoned without Mowleson.

His shutters were being put up as I arrived, and he was standing in his doorway, this much-respected man, discussing the day's event with some other local tradesmen, his neighbours. I had scarcely set eyes on him than I felt a weight at the heart, for his was a face that spoke hopelessness to any appeal at compassion. He and Butts, the Sandbeach gossip, must have been cast in the same moulds. I learned subsequently that he was a



Methodist holding spiritual office in his church, and sat at vestry boards. His hard head was like a paving-stone, and his eyes had no colour in them. As to his business, he was in the condition of wanting to rent a villa in the country to go to of a Sunday; and if he could make any lucky stroke of trade, such as being advertised in all the papers in connection with some startling occurrence, his desires might be attainable. He invited me into his shop, but not into his parlour, and after hearing me state my errand, answered aloud, so that the other tradesmen might hear and be induced to come and listen to the moral dialogue, that he had made up his mind to prosecute on "public grounds." He pronounced "public," as if there were at least three p's to it. A policeman had come to tell him the thief arrested was Mrs. Halsey, a lady, but this was reason the more. There should be no difference between rich and poor in the apportionment of justice. (Here a quotation from scripture.) Besides there had been many jewel robberies of late, and jewellers were bound to stand by each other. This was Mowleson's opinion.

The other tradesmen assented, glad for once to have a gentleman's honour under the heels of their commercial boots, and so press it out of shape with stampings of scriptural jargon and counter-board aphorisms. Possibly none of these men would have been wholly callous if argued with separately. But they held together; the much-respected Mowleson declined to see me in private; and if I found a plea that seemed to touch one of the number, it was triumphantly rebutted by the rest, who were only vulnerable on some other point. I made myself humble with these men. I flattered them. I sounded one by one all the chords by which men can be moved—interest, vanity, commiseration. But it served nothing. Though my tongue faltered in the end at the thought of what Mara was about to suffer, and though I could not restrain some tears from welling up into my eyes as I said: "God forgive you, gentlemen, more freely than you forgive," there was not one of my hearers but seemed persuaded that the kingdom of heaven would be his if he only remained thus steadfast in denying pity. After I had prayed and pleaded for two hours, the much respected Mowleson put an end to the controversy by saying crisply: "I deeply regret being obliged to perform a painful duty, but my mind is made up; besides I have already put the case into the hands of my solicitors," and he mentioned a firm of attorneys for whom sending people to jail was as daily meat is to other persons.

With what feelings I returned to the police-station need not be told. There were two tattered and drunken women who had just been brought in when I came back, and the inspector who was entering the charge against them, excused himself civilly for not showing me to the room where Halsey was. He gave me verbal directions where to find it. I threaded a corridor leading to the private part of the station, and came to the door that stood slightly ajar. I pushed it softly, and saw Mara lying on a bed, with a great coat which a kindly policeman had lent, thrown over her feet. The regularity of her breathing told that she was asleep.

Halsey was seated by the bedside holding one of her hands between his. There was no light in the room but the flicker of a small fire in the grate.

I whispered Halsey's name. He looked up, pressed a kiss on his wife's hand and laid it gently on the bed. Then he stole towards me on tiptoe. "Well?"

My looks told him more than my words: "The man won't withdraw the charge, Halsey; but it will break down in court, so courage!"

He remained silent some moments. "Well," said he, when he had rallied from the blow. "Well, if you have not succeeded, I should not have done so. And after all it doesn't much matter. The affair must have become public since Mara was arrested in the streets, and so many tradesmen, and our own servants know all about it. It is best that the facts should be set forth in full truth so that no false rumours may be hinted. Mara will be committed for trial; we shall bail her out to-morrow, and of course any jury will acquit her; then we shall go and live abroad. I shall rely upon you, old fellow, to take all the steps for the defence. Be Mara's counsel, and see my solicitor about it early to-morrow. Then you'll have to call on my brother-in-law, and telegraph to Merry respecting bail: I'll only mix up firm friends in this business. Good night. I shall remain by Mara. You see she's sleeping. She actually entreated me to forgive her! Forgive her, good God! as if I had anything to forgive her!"

Next day, after the night charges had been disposed of at the district police court, Mara Halsey, aged 28, was indicted for stealing three rings, value seventy-five pounds, the property of Jabez Mowleson. Halsey had not left his wife all the night, and he had driven with her in the cab from the station, a policeman in plain clothes merely sitting on the box. At the court she was not put in the common room with the other prisoners. The magistrate, who knew Halsey, gave orders that she should be shown to his private apartment until the case was called; and he spared her the indignity of the dock, directing her to sit on a chair in front of it, Halsey being placed to the right of her, and myself, with Halsey's solicitor to the left. She had smiled sadly to me, and held out her little hand on meeting me in the court, as if to thank me for not doubting her. I suppose Halsey had told her that I had looked heart-broken on returning from my unsuccessful embassy to the jeweller's the evening before, and that I had spent all the night in consultation with solicitors and barristers, whom I had roused from their beds, to plan how this unholy charge might be frustrated. I had even thought it binding to advise Halsey in the morning to call in counsel of standing, so that no chance should be missed through my want of experience or skill. But to this he had replied vigorously: "No, there is no counsel like a friend. You shall defend her before the magistrate and before the jury. If you cannot save her no hired advocacy would." And in this instance I think he was right.

The court was full to choking. It is a mystery how certain things get about in a way to convolve of a sudden all the people one least expects to meet. There had been no paragraph about the affair in the papers, and yet the bench and the counsel's part of the court were crowded with men—barristers, Oxford men, and others who had heard of the matter the first thing in the morning, heaven only knows how. It was, however, an audience sympathetic towards Mara. Nobody, not being a middle-aged Pharisee devoted to business pursuits, respectability and vestry interests, could gaze unmoved at the child-faced prisoner who nestled close to her husband, and shivered from shame at her position, but whose features bore no trace of guilt. The magistrate seemed really touched, though he had a right to be unimpressible *ex-officio*, and when the prosecuting attorney opened the case he frowned at him not very impartially.

The depositions were brief. The respected Mowleson reiterated all we know; but I succeeded in eliciting the following points: 1, that Mara had not asked to be shown the rings or any other trinkets; 2, that the woman who came in and spoke to Mara might very well have passed for a beggar, being poorly clad; 3, that Mara had shown no undue precipitation in leaving the shop, and that when overtaken and brought back she had not offered any resistance, verbal or otherwise, to her pockets being searched. This last fact was borne out by the policeman, who had stated that the prisoner had at first seemed more surprised than alarmed at the charge, and *had herself held her pocket open for him to dip his hand into*. It was only when the rings were discovered that her demeanour had changed, and that she had become as if crazy.

I had purposely refrained for my cross-examination from adopting offensive tone towards the jeweller. This answers in cases where barristers' tongues only and not their hearts are in their work. I had been minute in my questions but conciliatory, hoping no longer to get the charge withdrawn by an appeal to sentiment, but trusting I might honestly convince Mowleson that our defence was a just one, and that there had been no intentional theft. It seemed now as if my method were going to succeed. Mowleson had been surprised, then evidently disconcerted by the hostility of all the faces round him. Maybe he had relied upon receiving a compliment from the magistrate upon his integrity in not suffering the ends of justice to be defeated. Not getting the compliment it appeared to strike him suddenly that he might be doing himself more commercial harm than good by his stubbornness; and this disquieting thought seemed to lead him to the reflection that perhaps after all his suspicions were unfounded, and that the whole thing was an unlucky mishap. I summed up the evidence, addressing myself more to him than to the magistrate, and pointing out with all the temper I could command, that there had been nothing in Mrs. Halsey's manner to show criminal intention; that she was above want, that she had more trinkets at home than she ever cared to wear, and that her having unconsciously put the rings

into her pocket was the only conclusion in accordance with charity and sense.

"Yes," assented the magistrate. "It does not seem to me, Mr. Mowleson, that there was anything intentional here. It strikes me this is a case of absence of mind."

Mowleson's paving-stone head appeared to have come round, by degrees and from public influence, to the same notion. He conferred with his attorney, and though the latter held good from professional instinct, the jeweller was evidently not being swayed by him. In another minute the charge was about to be withdrawn, and I already heaved a sigh of gratitude and relief, rising, and preparing to escort Mara out of court. Feeling she was about to be freed she turned and beamed a look of thankfulness upon me.

Then this is what happened.

To the left of me, and within the bar behind which stood the public, there had been sitting a woman, dressed plainly, but with great neatness. She had cold features and keen eyes, and she appeared to hold some official position, for her place was one where solicitors usually sat. It seemed to me that I had seen her before in other courts, and I had a notion she was a prison matron. Once or twice during the case I had noticed her lean forward, and try to get a view of Mara's features ; but Mara being on a line with her, and in some degree screened by me, she had not succeeded. Just as I had risen, however, persuaded that everything was at an end, this woman stood up again, and leaned right forward. I had just turned to Mara, and was smiling back the thankful look she had cast me, when in one second her features grew fixed into appalling rigidity, as if petrified. She half rose, as if going to fly, then sank back overwhelmed, and trembling from head to foot as though in an ague. I faced round, and saw a smile flit over the cold woman's thin lips. She whispered to a policeman.

The policeman, with an amazed expression, said, "Your worship, the head matron of the — Penitentiary is in court, and says she can identify the lady."

A thunderbolt falling through the roof could not have occasioned a more general start ; but in an instant there was a lull. All eyes turned towards the matron, and one could have heard a raindrop fall.

"I request that the matron may be sworn," I demanded, scarcely knowing what I said.

The matron was sworn, and advanced towards Mara, into whose almost death-like face she gazed an instant without emotion.

"This is Mara Hort," she said. "She was committed for trial about ten years ago on the charge of murdering a policeman, and being concerned in a great jewel robbery. The grand jury returned a true bill on both counts, but she was only convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. She underwent five years of her penalty, and was liberated about five years ago on a ticket-of-leave."

Feeling as though I were half-paralyzed, I turned to support Mara; but I had to give my assistance to her husband. Halsey had staggered bolt upright, had battled away the air a moment with his hands, and had then fallen heavily forward senseless.

"Arthur!" cried Mara, flinging herself on his prostrate body, and wailing with an accent which froze one to the marrow from its superhuman anguish,—“Arthur, I swear by our child that I was innocent! They sentenced me to prison, but I had done nothing. There's a secret I can't disclose. Arthur, speak to me!”

## V.

There were two people who continued to believe in Mara's innocence—her husband and I. The rest of the world felt at most pity, and there was probably joy in Sandbeach that the suspicions of all the respectable folk concerning Mara should at length have been verified. As for Justice, she took her usual enlightened view of the whole affair. The ring-robbery assumed a new complexion the moment Mara had undergone a previous conviction for felony. She was committed for trial, and found guilty. The judge, an equitable man, learned and phlegmatic, pointed out to her how grievous was her crime in forcing access to an honest gentleman's affections and home under an assumed name, and by stories which he presumed had been false. He was very much afraid that she had abused her fraudulently-obtained position to carry on an organized system of robberies in partnership with her former associates, and that this ring theft, which had been providentially brought home to her, was but one of many such undetected. He ended by sentencing her to ten years' penal servitude as an “habitual criminal.”

Arthur Halsey was not present at his wife's trial. He had broken down a few days previously under brain-fever. It was I who defended Mara, and when sentence had been pronounced held out my hand to her over the dock-spikes and said: “I know you are innocent, and so does Arthur. God bless you. We shall devote our lives to discovering the truth and righting you.”

She answered, pressing my hand between both of hers: “Comfort Arthur, and kiss Mara for me. But do not try to discover my secret, dearest friend. You will all learn it when we meet in heaven.”

Her calm resignation since her commitment for trial, and during the trial itself, had surprised me. It seemed as though now that Arthur knew who she was, a load had been removed from her conscience almost too heavy to bear. She was no longer the same woman. She betrayed a fortitude that was amazing in a creature so frail, and as I walked sadly home to Halsey's sick bed after the trial which had widowed him, I asked myself: “What terrible secret can there be buried in this afflicted woman's soul?”

We had both of us repeated the question until our brains reeled, and our hearts were crushed, and it was from piteous inability to unravel it—

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Arthur Halsey was not present at his wife's trial. He had broken down a few days previously under brain-fever. It was I who defended Mara, and when sentence had been pronounced held out my hand to her over the dock-spikes and said: “I know you are innocent, and so does Arthur. God bless you. We shall devote our lives to discovering the truth and righting you.”

She answered, pressing my hand between both of hers: “Comfort Arthur, and kiss Mara for me. But do not try to discover my secret, dearest friend. You will all learn it when we meet in heaven.”

Her calm resignation since her commitment for trial, and during the trial itself, had surprised me. It seemed as though now that Arthur knew who she was, a load had been removed from her conscience almost too heavy to bear. She was no longer the same woman. She betrayed a fortitude that was amazing in a creature so frail, and as I walked sadly home to Halsey's sick bed after the trial which had widowed him, I asked myself: “What terrible secret can there be buried in this afflicted woman's soul?”

We had both of us repeated the question until our brains reeled, and our hearts were crushed, and it was from piteous inability to unravel it—

from inability to seize the justification which he knew must be somewhere within his reach if he could only discover the veil which cloaked it, that Halsey had succumbed. In the delirium of his fever he cried, addressing me by my name: "Have you got the clue? It must be among those papers. Read them all again, and more carefully this time!"

The papers he meant were the newspaper reports of Mara's first trial, ten years before, which we had procured. We had pored over them together, and had learned that Mara's account of herself, given to Halsey before their marriage was all true so far as it went. She had invented nothing, though she had held back some of the truth. Thus the name of Child, under which she had been married, was the only one she had a right to bear, that of Hort, the name under which she had been convicted being her natural father's, which her mother had adopted. It was quite true that her mother had been heartlessly deceived by her father, and that, after that Mrs. Hort being destitute, had resumed her first trade of sempstress. It was again true that after her mother's death Mara had met with benevolent friends, under whose roof she had remained until the master of the house had fallen in love with her, when, to save him against himself she had fled. Only, instead of meeting with these friends *immediately* upon her mother's death, she had only been taken in hand by them after her release from the penitentiary on the ticket-of-leave. They had been put in the way of helping her by a discharged prisoner's aid society; and being attracted by her sweet temper, her beauty, and the good reports the prison matrons all gave of her, they had soon offered her a home under their roof, suspecting that she had not been so entirely guilty as appearances showed, and that she was perhaps more sinned against than sinning. We learned these particulars from the people's own lips, but Mara's flight had, of course, in a great measure revoked the good opinion which had been formed of her. At least so her benefactress said. This lady's husband we saw in private, and he confessed with shame that Mara's grace, goodness, and gentleness had indeed turned his head, and he had easily guessed why she had deserted his house. He considered that there was some mystery about the girl; himself he could believe no wrong of her.

With respect to the crime for which Mara had been convicted, the circumstances were these. On her mother's death Mara had gone to live with a fellow-sempstress, named Jesse Mill. This girl had been well behaved at first, but having become the mistress of a card sharper, welsher and cracksman, named Jem Raff, she had taken to receiving and concealing property stolen by him. A great jewel robbery having been traced to Jem, the detectives had at length succeeded in discovering his connection with Jesse Mill, and having been informed of his usual hours for visiting her, they had lain in wait for him one evening, and whilst he, Jesse, and Mara Hort (who had a room next Jesse's) were at tea in the latter's room, a policeman had burst the door open. Jem had escaped out of the window, which was a top one on the roof. The policeman had

tried to dart in pursuit, but Mara Hort had struck him from behind on the head with a poker as he was half through the window, and this had caused him to lose his balance and fall over the roof's parapet into the street, where he had been killed by the fall. Nobody had seen Mara strike the blow, but when the second policeman (who should have been by the side of the first when the latter broke the door open, but who had lagged behind) entered the room the crime had been committed. Mara, however, charged herself with the murder, and completely exonerated her friend. On her box being searched, jewelry stolen by Jem Raff, was found in it, and she was arraigned on the double charge of wilful murder and complicated in a robbery; Jesse Mill being only indicted on the lesser count of receiving stolen goods. The grand jury found a true bill against Mara Hort, but the petty jury convicted her only of manslaughter, because of her youth and beauty it was said. People also rumoured that the same causes had probably moved the judge when he sentenced her to so little as seven years' penal servitude, and there was even some scandal on the subject. A few journalists who had not seen Mara, and could consequently remain dispassionate, had written virtuous leading articles.

These items constituted all we could learn, for Mara would add nothing to them. Her husband and I both exhorted her, in pity on us, her child, and herself, to give her own version of the atrocious history; but though our supplications must have put her to moral torture, worse than slow fire, she constantly answered that the secret was not hers, and that besides, if she did speak, all that she alone could say would not serve her. Halsey and I then set ourselves to find Jesse Mill and Jem Raff, but the former had been convicted at the same time as Mara of receiving stolen goods, and had been condemned to a few months' imprisonment only; Jem Raff had got clear away. The police could give us no clue to their whereabouts. We searched the Whitechapel slums, cross-questioned thieves, made the acquaintance of all those bad characters who might be colonizing African wastes for us if the Government did not prefer to keep them as curiosities to show the stranger; but search or question as we would, we heard nothing of Jem or his honest mistress, who seemed to have melted into space. It was then that Halsey, who had been worn away to the shadow of his former self, broke down; and shortly after the trial took place.

Halsey was many weeks recovering, but he did recover, and then began for him a life of misery by which fate appeared determined to make him pay for every one of his past glad moments, by tenfold the number of tears and moans. He left the house where Mara and he had lived, and took lodgings near the penitentiary. He walked round and round its walls, with his child in his arms, or toddling by his side, its small hands clinging to his. This was the only place where he ever went for exercise, and half his income was spent in fees to warders or nurses who brought him every day the news that his wife was well, or indisposed, and often—contrary to all rules—messages from her. The regulations for convict establishments allowed him to write to his wife, and to receive a letter from her once in three

months, both letters being perused by the governor of the penitentiary; and once a quarter he was allowed to pay his wife a visit of fifteen minutes' duration. The visit was conducted in this wise: There were two iron gates a yard apart, and between them a chair where a matron sat. Halsey came to his gate with the child, and Mara to hers. In this way they could talk, the matron listening to what they said; but they could not so much as touch the tips of each other's fingers: and to have passed notes to each other containing but one of those endearing expressions that lose half their soothing charm when pronounced in any third person's hearing, would have been forbidden. Imagine a man meeting, under such conditions, the woman who is more to him than his heart's blood! Imagine him seeing her shed tears, and being unable to press her to his heart, and whisper to her to take courage and hope in God! Imagine, above all, the man feeling that his fellows are submitting his wife to these infernal torments, and keeping her from him through no crime of hers! But this is an age of humanity, and we talk of those barbarous times when society put offenders out of their misery in half a minute by killing them.

There is no use in dilating on a life which was a human adaptation of hell. I had thought at Mara's trial that I should soon be able to learn something which would throw a light on her innocence, which I had never ceased to trust; but two years went by. I had made not one step out of the darkness, and hope sickened within me. Halsey's hair had greyed, though he was scarcely thirty, and his voice was that of a broken-hearted man. One day he came to me and said quietly: "I received this morning a letter from where Mara is (he never said the penitentiary), to tell me she was ill, and I was allowed to go and see her in the infirmary. She is going to die."

We remained silent some minutes. Halsey pressed his finger over his eyes, and hot tears slowly trickled through them over his hand. At length he continued: "I thank God for it. She will be out of her pain soon. Death is more merciful than men."

"Is it hopeless?" I faltered, dreading this death, which should remove Mara before her guiltlessness was established. It is curious how men will go on hoping against hope.

"The Doctor has told me the truth," answered Halsey, as if with gratitude. "She may live six months but that is the longest. She may be called away in eight days?"

It was a week, day for day, after this, that I was told a woman wanted to see me. My researches after Jesse Mill were so well known that I often received calls from vagabonds of both sexes who had known her formerly, and fancied they had seen her, or heard of her. The present woman, however, said quickly: "If you want to see Jesse you must come with me at once, for, in an hour, it might be too late. Slithery Ben has done for her."

I followed without a word, called a cab, got into it with the woman, and was driven to a lodging-house in Seven Dials. The cabman seemed

by no means so reassured about his safety in that region as I did. And as soon as I had paid him drove away very much faster than he had come. The lodging-house was one of the lowest description, haunted by crime-dyed faces, which made way for me curiously, and seemed to consider me as a being from another world, though none showed a disposition to molest. I climbed a greasy staircase with a rope baluster. The woman threw open a door and showing me the squalid form of a woman with a bandaged head on a mattress, said, "That's Jesse Mill. She was screwed t'other night, and got bandying words with Slithery Ben, who had been ginning too. He floored her with a bottle ; and it didn't look much at the time, but now the doctor says she's going to die of it. Jess, here's the gentleman and there ain't no Charley with him."

The figure on the mattress propped herself on her elbow and looked at me ; it was a countenance devoid of all feminine expression. Drink and crime had unsexed her. Yet it was said she had been pretty once !

"I'm past caring about the Charleys," she answered with an effort at a hoarse laugh, and yet somehow, at the sight of a stranger above her sphere and pale, a rag of woman's modesty lit up her face, and she drew her ragged counterpane so as to cover her emaciated throat.

"You've been asking for me," she went on, "it's about Mara. Where is she?"

"In prison."

"What, you've not got her out yet?" And she appeared astonished.

"How should we have got her out?"

"I thought you swells could have got her out long ago." (Here she laughed in a rambling way.) "Money does everything. If I'd had some when I was born I shouldn't be here now. Well, it was I that stole the rings ; but I'll tell you how it happened. I met Mara one day in the streets looking rich, and I asked her to give me money for old fellowships' sake. I didn't threaten to dog her, mind that, you ; I owed her already more than I could pay her back unless I were to do for her what she'd done for me years ago. Well, she gave me money ; and did so twice again ; but the fourth time when I'd come to watch for her going out to see if I couldn't get a lump sum from her to take me out of the country, I saw her go to a jeweller's shop. Then I thought that if I could follow her in and lay hold of something whilst the man was serving her it would save me the trouble of begging. I looked through the window, and set eyes on a lot of rings. So I walked in, and whilst the man was lifting me down a clock I whipped up three of the hoops so quickly that I'm blessed if Mara herself saw me do it. But when that man turns round what does he do but stare at me, so that I knew he suspected me of something. Then I got into a panic, for I knew if he missed the rings he'd follow me out and have me quodded. Then it would have been fifteen years for me at least, for the Charleys have been wanting me for some time about other things. If I could have put back the rings into the tray I'd have done it ; but I couldn't, his eye wouldn't

have let my hand get so near the counter as an inch. So I dropped the things into Mara's pocket, which it wasn't difficult for me to do as I was next her. I thought they wouldn't suspect a lady like her." Here she paused to gasp, and moaned: "Oh my poor head!"

"And the murder ten years ago?" I inquired.

"Ah! has Mara told you about that?" she asked not excitedly, but with a dull glare in her eyes.

"Nothing about your share in it," was my cold answer.

"What?" she asked with an accent of cunning doubt; "nothing even to her husband."

"She has kept your secret entirely," I replied, quietly.

A flush rose to the woman's colourless face, she covered her face with one of her hands, and for the first time, probably for many years, her voice lapsed into something like softness. "Look here," she exclaimed, "there are some women who are born devils, and others angels. It was I murdered that policeman, but as I had been good to Mara and her mother, in days before, in fact, before I got to know Jem, she took the murder on herself; because, as we knew the judges would have hanged me, or at least shut me up for life, whereas she being young, and having never been put in prison as I had, it was easy to make it manslaughter in her case. Let me tell you she didn't know Jem was a cracksman. When I gave her those jewels he had stolen to put in her box—for my own was full of 'em—I told her he was a traveller for a jewelling 'ouse, and she thought him an honest man and me a pure one like herself. When I heard her sentenced to penal servitude, though; and saw how pluckily for my sake who wasn't worthy to lick the mud off her boots, she swore it was her little bit of a fist that had killed the Charley, I was half druv' to close her lips by kissing 'em and to cry:—'Don't believe her my lord, it was me that did it!' But then they would have parted me all my life from Jem, and that I couldn't have borne, for I loved Jem then."

It was of no use to waste time in reproaches: "You can repair some of the evil you have done if you will swear all you have just said before a magistrate and witnesses."

"Go and fetch 'em," she murmured, sinking back on her mattress; "but be quick about it, and you needn't be afraid about bringing Charleys. They may take me to the prison if they like. I should die more comfortably there." And once again this being, who had once been a woman, laughed hideously.

## VI.

In the present generous condition of our law, a person who has not committed an offence and been imprisoned for it, can only be discharged on proof of his innocence by a pardon from her Majesty forgiving him for that offence which he has not committed. In due course, that is after a month or two of official objections, correspondence, clerk-doings and the



rest of it, Mara obtained a Queen's pardon. The negotiations had been kept secret from Mara. Her husband brought her the "pardon," and her child at the same time, and it was little Mara, now grown to be five years old, who laid the parchment on her mother's white bed in the prison infirmary. Then Arthur knelt down, and bowing his head over his wife's hand, said with humble adoration: "We know your secret, Mara."

Her poor, sweet dying face lit up with the last splendid radiance which the sun sometimes sheds over the evening of a day which has been cloudy and full of storms. She twined her arms round her husband's neck, and round her child's, and whispered to them both: "You will forgive me, Arthur, for not having told you all. But Jesse had been good to us when nobody else had, and to suffer a few years in her stead as a return for that was not too much. But I think now I ought to have told you all when we were going to be married, for you are the kindest noblest soul in the world, and you would have forgiven me, I feel. Only the word prison sounds so dreadful that I was afraid that I should lose your love, dear, dear boy, if I pronounced it, and to have lost your love would have killed me. Those people at that little sea-place had frightened me by their coldness, and I felt so friendless. . . ."

Her breath was failing, but after a pause she kissed the little Mara, and nestled her head on Arthur's shoulder—"Arthur, dear, as little Mara grows up you will teach her this, won't you, that if she ever meets with any one who is quite abandoned,—quite, as I was till you took me, she is to make a friend of her, and not listen to what the world says."

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## Autumnal Trout-fishing in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

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"I love any discourse of rivers and fish and fishing ; the time spent in such discourses passes away very pleasantly."—WALTON'S *Complete Angler*, pt. i. cap. 18.

FROM the days of Lady Juliana Berners multitudes of volumes have been written by many generations of enthusiasts in praise of angling. He would indeed be long-suffering who could listen to the recapitulation of but a tithe of these encomiums at the present day. Angling has long ceased to be the privilege of "gentyll and noble men ;" every one may fish who will, and most men are content, without casting about for reasons, to base their liking on love of the sport. With very many, however, secondary and subsidiary delights commend angling to them. Fly-fishing, in particular, charms its votaries by its concomitants. The constant change of scene which it necessitates on the part of the angler—the varied pictures of natural beauty which it brings before him in the streams and their flower-starred margins, the meadows around, the woods and hills beyond,—the close relations in which it places him with the insect world, the moralist's special sphere—the vigorous correspondence of hand, eye and judgment which it calls forth when the quarry is so vigilant a fish as the trout—these and the like are potent recommendations of fly-fishing to old and young, the jaded or the poetic temperament. Add that trout-fishing is, for the most part, pursued during spring and summer when English woodlands and valleys are radiant with blossom or heavy with leafy shade, when the song of birds thrills the fragrant air, and the cuckoo "tells her name to all the hills," and the only wonder is that any one can resist its fascinations. How powerful is this attraction was curiously exemplified in one of the obituary notices of *The Times* this year, which ran (the names only altered) as follows:—

"On the 10th June, at Friar's Place, E. Lambeth, James Wilson, Esq., aged 67 years, for 60 of those years an angler."

Could an epitaph be more affecting ? Imagination at once pictures the old man smoothing, with pardonable enthusiasm, on his death-bed, the flies and hackles which had so long been dear to him (as another and a much greater Wilson—Christopher North—actually did when a-dying) ; in his fitful slumbers we fancy him dreaming for the thousandth time of those far distant days of childhood when, a toddler of seven, he dipped string and crooked pin into the paternal brook ; anon, he captures once more the mighty pike of Slapton Lea, the proudest achievement of his angling days, or wakes with a start to lose that fine Spey salmon which he has never ceased to regret ; and then succeed placid memories of rambles down

swallow-skimmed meads taking trout with the May-fly, and the river somehow broadens more than it used to do; there is a roar of many waters in front, the sunset blazes forth in sudden crimson and gold over the western sky, and the old angler's soul is rapt from earth, hurried "to that immortal sea which brought us hither."

Fly-fishers have often amused themselves with tracing their art to its inventor. Without going so far back as Belus, to whom Walton attributes the discovery of angling, there can be little doubt that the invention of artificial fly-fishing is of very ancient date. Homer indeed only knows angling with a bait (Od. xii. 251). Ælian, however, speaks of the Macedonian anglers making an imitation of the fly *hippurus* on the banks of the Astræus, with purple-wool body and white wings. Fly-fishing cannot be tracked in English literature beyond the Book of St. Alban's. Fabulous as are the number of artificial flies recommended in most angling manuals, and gorgeous as is the assortment of them contained in tackle-shops to take inexperienced or youthful anglers, old hands know well that half-a-dozen different patterns of flies are sufficient for most trout-streams: even fewer are recommended by some authorities. No one would ever dream of resorting now to a river's bank furnished, as the patriarch of the craft would equip him, with a bag containing "bear's hair or the hair of a brown or sad-coloured heifer," hackles, differently coloured silks or crewels, "the feathers of a drake's head, hog's wool," gold and silver tinsel, frelimart fur, and as many other materials as would have furnished the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*. If he trusts to our counsel he will fasten inside his hat a few March browns and May-flies for their appropriate seasons, two or three small dark-bodied, white-winged flies (known as "blue uprights" in the west of England), and the same number of "coachmen" and "red professors," and he will be independent of all fishing-tackle makers and every possible caprice of the trout, † at least in any water with which we are acquainted. If the angler be ambitious of making his own flies (as every ancient authority urges on him), we cannot give him better advice than that he read the following lines of Gay (*Rural Sports*, canto i.), which are as true in their directions as they are poetically beautiful:—

To frame the little animal, provide  
All the gay hues that wait on female pride;  
Let nature guide thee; sometimes golden wire  
The shining bellies of the fly require;  
The peacock's plumes thy tackle must not fail,  
Nor the dear purchase of the sable's tail.

\* *Walton's Angler*, pt. i. cap. 5.

† Let not the angler be put off with the "yellow professor" of the tackle-shops, but insist on having the "red professor" (invented and so called by Christopher North), and thus dressed—dull red body, full mallard wings, and two bristles in the tail.

Each gaudy bird some slender tribute brings,  
 And lends the growing insect proper wings :  
 Silks of all colours must their aid impart  
 And every fur promote the fisher's art.  
 So the gay lady with excessive care  
 Borrows the pride of land, of sea, and air ;  
 Furs, pearls, and plumes the glittering thing displays,  
 Dazzles our eyes and easy hearts betrays.

April is perhaps the most pleasant month of the year wherein to sally down to the water-meadow, still retaining traces of winter's floods, and ramble onwards fly-fishing. The beauty of promise is everywhere around the angler, and he commences his pastime with renewed zest after the long dull fence months. Doubtless trout are in their best condition during June, but autumnal fly-fishing possesses special charms for the meditative student of nature. The year, like the sport, is waning. Weeds are choking the streams ; a yellow spray depends every here and there from the birch, or flecks the umbrageous masses of elm foliage ; frost's scathing breath has just tinted with red and gold the horse-chestnuts. The hedge-rows, indeed, are sufficiently sombre, save where the crimson haws blaze in the afternoon sunshine ; the fields are ragged-looking, with tufts of coarse grass and dry bents. All joyousness has died out from the swallow's flight, which is now low and methodical, unvaried with those gyrations and gleeful twitterings which marked it in summer. The angler is melancholy at the prospect of a speedy end of the season, and for that reason sees the landscape through a saddened medium. The light mists and blue aerial distances, which his eye hailed so gladly six weeks ago as softening and beautifying the horizon, are now merely suggestive of rheumatism and catarrh. Moody and abstracted he somewhat sulkily casts his flies, and loves to be reflective, and plumes himself on growing philosophical, superior to the vain boyish delight of filling his basket. And so the end comes, generally in a week of storm and cold weather. The rod is revarnished (or *ought* to be) and hung up. Memories must take the place of anticipations for another six months. Trout-fishing is over for the season.

Yet with some minds the hectic flush of nature and the saddened tinge which autumn brings to reflection are even more fascinating than the budding beauty of May, the living blue of July's skies, its fields glowing with colour, its air throbbing with healthful vigour. Just because the termination of fly-fishing is so close at hand, in the spirit of the old hero, they are more than ever anxious that—

something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note may yet be done.

The quiet decay of vegetation and the shortening twilight irresistibly dispose such an angler to moralize, while regret twines a "fisher's garland" of dead joys with blissful hopes for next May. In the endeavour to recall to him a few of the delights of autumnal fly-fishing, we shall

attempt to lessen the necessary sameness of description by bidding him accompany us to a part of England little known to the sportsman, and a positive Sahara to the ordinary tourist. Lincolnshire is more a victim of calumny and misrepresentation than any other English county. That its natives are still akin to the ancient Gyrvii\* is the popular belief; dark hints about not being web-footed and the necessity of keeping a boat instead of a pony-carriage are thrown out when any one mentions his intention of living there. The fens give a gray colouring to most people's ideas of Lincolnshire; whereas nothing can be more distinct from the flat boggy features of the south than the north-west of the county, known as the Wolds. It does not indeed possess a tittle of the interest, whether economical or as connected with its natural features and history, which resides in Holland, the fenny division of the shire; but it contains many marked peculiarities of its own, and not a few rural beauties, while its brooks are set in an *entourage* of pleasant scenes and antiquarian relics not dissimilar to the streams of Northamptonshire itself. Three ridges run from the north of the county to Horncastle, where they may be said, speaking roughly, to converge and die away. These are part of the Pennine Range, the backbone of England, and after stretching through Yorkshire, dip under the Humber, to reappear on the opposite side, in their familiar chalk and green sand, for a strip of some forty-eight miles in length. A breadth of fourteen miles covers these three ridges with intervening flats of arable land and low grassy bottoms, through which occasionally runs a rivulet. Fine views over a vast extent of champaign country may be obtained from the summits of these Wolds, which are about five hundred feet high, terminated on the one hand by Lincoln Cathedral; by Yorkshire, the Spurn Light and the German Ocean, on the other side. Fertile as is this curious country, its great deficiency is the lack of streams. There are a few every here and there, one of which, the Bain, is celebrated far and wide for its meadows, and specially for its trout. Another rivulet, down which we purpose to lead our scholar, like Walton's Piscator, meanders through the eastern slopes, at one place lost in their vast hundred-acre arable fields, at another emerging near some secluded village with its square church tower, the typical form in the Wolds as opposed to the glorious spires of the fenny districts. The name of the village is certain to recall the Danish connection with this part of England by its termination in *by*. No less than two hundred and twelve places in Lincolnshire possess this affix, which, if philologically inclined, we can track through the German *wich*, down to the original Aryan root, from which spring the Sanskrit *vesa* = house, and the Latin *vicus*. These

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\* "They that inhabit this Fennish country were, in Saxon times, called Gyrvii, that is, Fen-men or Fen-dwellers—a kind of people according to the nature of the place where they dwell, rude, uncivil, and envious to all others, whom they call Upland-men; who, stalking on high upon stilts, apply their minds to grazing, fishing, or fowling."—CAMDEN.

Danish settlements are dotted all over the Wolds; and the Saxon church-towers, yet remaining in a few instances, with their early English names, the stones of which may sometimes be seen reddened as by the action of fire, still tell their mute tale of the atrocities of the Scandinavian invasions. It is worth while adding a few more particulars to the above general account of a district so little known before we take up the rod in earnest. Ecclesiastical ruins are sprinkled everywhere. Here frowns an old abbey, such as Thornton, whose magnificent gateway must be familiar to all railway-travellers to the Humber; there crumbles into dust the east end and ambrie of the Præmonstratsian religious house at Ravendale. Many of the village churches show that a north aisle was formerly attached to them, and often its stones lie under green mounds in the adjoining yard. These are memorials of the evil times just before the Pilgrimage of Grace, when in this district, "by reason of so many farms engrossed in one man's hands, which cannot till them, the ploughs be decayed and the farmhouses and other dwelling-houses; so that when there was in a town twenty or thirty dwelling-houses, they be now decayed, ploughs and all the people clean gone, and the churches down, and no more parishioners in many parishes but a neatherd and a shepherd, instead of threescore or fourscore persons." \* The pastures, which the avarice of the county gentlemen in Henry VIII.'s reign had reclaimed from the plough, have in the last century and the beginning of this one been largely broken up again, and the steam-plough's whistle and rattle is heard in autumn far and wide over these Wold hills, which are noted for their wheat-crops. A curious revulsion has come upon the natives who till these fields. From having been one of the strictest of Roman Catholic shires in Henry VIII.'s time, even in Cromwell's days Lincolnshire was much leavened with Puritanism. This has now deepened into Wesleyanism, only to be paralleled in Wales and Cornwall. It is not at present deficient in public spirit or intelligence; though in Henry's estimation its inhabitants were "the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm, and of least experience."

"Ven.—Well, now let's go to your sport of angling.

*Piscator*.—Let's be going, with all my heart." †

Here we are, then, at the brook-side, carrying our own landing-net, and therefore independent, able to soliloquize or dream at leisure. In autumn, even if he take a man at other times, no true lover of nature can endure a henchman's presence. Outdoor beauty is then at its perfection, and must be silently absorbed by the devotee. A keeper or footman frightens away birds, throws stones at the water-rats, tells stories of Nancy Stokes or Reuben Nokes, and generally makes himself obnoxious just when his master's most poetic mood is upon him. A bluish-gray tint suffuses the meadows to-day, sure sign of morning frosts on the purple-bearded bents,

\* Rolls House MS., quoted in FROUDE'S *Hist. of England*, cap. xiii.

† *Walton's Angler*, pt. i. cap. 2.



for their fructification is seen to be of the most exquisite purple if one be plucked and held up to the light. The trees, too, have passed into that dark-green colour which heralds decay, from the various yellow shades of it which prevailed during summer. Autumn's livery of blue and silver decks the skies,—the tenderest, softest blue that ever gleamed in some Scandinavian Kriemhild's eyes, flecked with the fleeciest of white clouds, as if a tress of her blonde hair had blown across those eyes. The cattle are couched in the pale sunshine, happily unconscious that foot and mouth disease is rampant in the next parish. Now the rod is ready. A "coachman" and "red professor" will form tempting lures to-day, and they are soon careering down the glassy eddies over the light-green star-like water-weeds, and anon by the side of the darker American *anacharis*. Sedge birds hop up and down the great pink-flowered willow-herb on the opposite bank, trustful, for they know that anglers never harm them. The wild duck wings his way under the trees at the next bend of the stream, his reflection only being visible on its glittering surface. How we start! A water-rat has just leaped in, after that provoking fashion of its race, at our feet, and broken the current of our thoughts. It is almost the last time this season that we shall fish, and they are slightly tinged in consequence with melancholy. Yet how thoroughly has this fishing season been enjoyed! Every nook and secluded bend of the brook is dear to memory as having been the scene of some celebrated capture. Light fancies and airy hopes have blossomed in every one of those miniature forests of golden-rod which blaze on the other bank. Many an argosy, laden with jewelled thoughts and sparkling imaginations, have we despatched down these soft-flowing streams to that sea of forgetfulness which swallows so many golden purposes and visions. But those ventures bore off cares and petty troubles, leaving health and thankfulness in their place, so we will not grieve overmuch if our delightful rambles must soon end for the year. Hah! a fish rose, and we have missed him! That comes of dreaming.

Now we approach a certain lurking-place for a trout. Where an old pollard has fallen athwart the stream, a little raft of sticks, rushes, &c. has collected, and the bank is somewhat worn away by the water's action, so that a fringe of the crimson rootlets of the willow is left bare. Lightly float the flies into this little bay. In vain! There is no response to the line of invitation, no electric thrill, so dear to the fly-fisher, pervades our frame. Sadly we pass on. The ogress who frequented this lair has retired to the golden-gravelled shallows of some tributary rivulet, where watercresses and the last forget-me-nots of the year yet linger, in order to prepare a cradle for the little fry. May no greedy wild duck light upon the innocents!

Here the brook is spanned by a footbridge, which it carries away at least three times every winter. In a couple of hours' walking we have only taken a brace of trout, about three quarters of a pound apiece, which is the average size of the fish in this stream, where they obtain plenty of food from the deep muddy holes and overhanging branches.

Trout seldom attain any size in a rapid river flowing over gravel beds or rock ledges, but a change of conditions at once shows the effect of abundance of food. It is worth remarking that one of these fish is much darker than the other, having been taken from a deep black scour beneath an overhanging bank, while the other had lived on the shallows where the chalk comes close to the surface, and many light-coloured pebbles abound. This points to a beautiful economy of nature to aid these fishes' escape from their numerous enemies by assimilating them to the tints of the ground whereon they lie.\* "Put a living brown trout," says that admirable observer, Mr. St. John, "into a white basin of water, and it becomes, within half-an-hour, of a light colour, (in the case of some fish the change is perceptible in five minutes). Keep the fish living in a white jar for some days, and it becomes absolutely white; in a dark-coloured vessel, in a quarter-of-an-hour it becomes as dark-coloured as the bottom of the jar, and consequently difficult to be seen." It may be questioned whether this power of adaptation on the part of trout is a voluntary or an involuntary process, but it probably partakes of both, and furnishes a curious example of instinct to the philosophical angler, who loves indeed to take fish, but is still more gratified if he can enlarge his knowledge of their marvellous habits—a department of nature which has been too much neglected by science.

Under one end of the plank-bridge is a rivulet, which leads through beds of submerged water-weeds into a favourite reach, and down it merrily swim our flies. There are no trout here to-day, however, or they are too depressed in spirits to rise at the silken gauds. We have recourse to a pocket pistol to cure the disappointment, and a cloud slowly obscures the sun, emblem of the blight that has fallen on our hopes. Sadly skirting the osier-bed, the best spot on the brook is reached. It runs here through a valley with high chalk bluffs on each side, and at its lowest point is a deep pool—Phœbe's Pool—identified with a tragic accident that here befell an old maid's favourite cat. A perfect giant of a trout is always to be found under the nettles on the other side, and many is the struggle we have had with him. Never does the "coachman" pass by without being set upon; there is a brief struggle—a snap—and he is carried off to the cannibal's lair. It is so late in the season that the fish must be put into the basket to-day. Having tried every strand of gut, and strengthened all the knots, with heart throbbing like a steam-engine in expectation of a rush, we suffer the lure to glide past his den. There is no response. Again it floats by, and again in vain. Slowly we awake to the fact that the season is drawing to a close. The red-spotted patriarch has gone upstream after his dusky love, may no predatory otter meet him on his travels! Next year he will be here again, more fat and gluttonous than ever, wholly unable to resist a minnow.

The mill, with its rushing weir and ducks now appears, and the

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\* *Natural History and Sport in Moray*, p. 25.

miller, though young, yet as shrewd as Mr. Tulliver himself, waits to greet us. We pay him an outstanding account and offer to shake hands as we leave. He intimates with a smile that his hands are too "milky," whereupon the following colloquy ensues:—

*Angler.*—"Never mind; it does not signify what a man's hands are like if they are honest."

*Miller.*—"Well, sir," he replies with a sly twinkle of his eye, "I have heard say that an honest miller ought to have a tuft of hair on the palm of his hand."

*Angler* (spying his advantage)—"Let me look at yours then."

*Miller.*—"Ah, but they do say, sir, that you must be an honest man to see it there!"

And he burst into so unfeignedly honest a laugh that we retire, confident that he possesses the mystical tuft, even if we cannot ourselves perceive it. Beyond the dam is a favourite hole, but while approaching, a sandwich-paper on the grass meets our eyes; some one has been there beforehand, so we may as well pass on. A thoroughly characteristic scene here succeeds. The valley opens out into a fair expanse of harvest fields, studded with cornsheafs set on end, with the whirr of a reaping-machine sounding in the distance; and then far-off blue hills and woods, all glorified in full floods of light poured athwart them from the setting sun. It is a view typical of many another of the kind in the Lincolnshire Wolds. Turning round, we find the valley lying in deep shade, the white chalk cliffs opposite brought out in blinding distinctness, with their thin green covering at the top, and here and there a drift of crimson poppies to give the requisite eye of colour. Every angler ought to be an artist. In our unsuccessful fishing we can at present fall back upon artistry, and long for Mr. Millais's skilful hand and deft brush. This pastoral scene, with the soft grey sky bending above it, and that string of seagulls returning across it to the sea, should then hang in next year's Academy. Now the sky catches the ruddy tints of the sunset; now it is rosed up to the zenith; and now again it dies with nice gradations of crimson and saffron into silver grey. The blue mists float upwards from the brook and stretch unsubstantial arms over the meadows. It is time to return. A sandpiper flies up with frightened whistle. Surely with one of Stewart's tackles, and a worm, we can take another fish. Into a likely hole the murderous engine, which impales a lob-worm, is softly dropped. Whiz! Hold on! now he is back again, and at length, as the gloaming sets in, he is landed safely—a fine fish of one and a half pounds. From the villanous look about his leathern jaws, he is evidently ashamed to be caught so late in the season. He is as thin withal and lanky as a Baltimore clipper, for flies are becoming scarce. How different is his present appearance to the Tyrian dyes and crimson-spotted scale-armour in which six weeks ago he must have been dight! How changed the mo'e in which he does battle for his life, no longer with the sprightly leaps and rushes by which he would have attempted to shake out the cruel little barb that would still

cling so pertinaciously to him. Though nothing like the size of a Thames trout or the fish of the Buddhist cosmogony, it is not a bad fish for so small a stream as this.

Before striking across the fields for home, it is worth while turning for a last look at the pretty little brook. There it glimmers, with a pensive melancholy in its murmurous quest of the sea, reminding us of that exquisitely musical line of Horace—

*Levis crepante lympa desilit pede.*

There it has cut its sparkling way for ages before we knew and loved it, there will it continue its babble for ages, maybe, after our name is forgotten. It has often carried our thoughts on its bosom into a pleasant dreamland, and this last lingering look shall bid adieu to it till next May. But

With stars and seawinds for her raiment,  
Night sinks on the sea ;

though the orange flush yet loiters in the east, loth, like us, to leave the day of charmed beauty, the moon is rising behind that dark wall of fir-trees. In all probability we shall not again fish this season. What wonder if sadness colours our meditations and lends a sombre hue to the year's most cherished memories ! With September and partridge-shooting the trout may well have a truce granted them.

The basket contains only five trout, but on this slender stream to take more in a few hours would demand an angler like Archdeacon Denison, "in piscium venatione nulli secundus,"\* according to Lord Lyttleton's sportive inscription. Besides which the true angler, who practises his art more as a vehicle to aid reflection and observation than to catch a great weight of fish, can always find secondary enjoyments in abundance around him, and if all else fail, finds comfort in Walton's philosophical verses :—

How poor a thing sometimes I find  
Will captivate a greedy mind ;  
And when none bite, I praise the wise,  
Whom vain allurements ne'er surprise.

In the last thirty years several causes have combined to render trout not only smaller but also more scarce in this as in many other British rivers and streams. Within living memory a fish of 3½ lbs. was taken in the water down which we have been rambling, but at present it contains very few that reach 2 lbs. in weight. The chief reason of this is the large increase of anglers who have sprung up under the fostering care of the many sporting papers which chronicle piscatory success. Access to more streams, again, has been much facilitated of late years, so that multitudes of town anglers now fish streams which, till within twenty

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\* *Ephemera*, Second Series, p. 327.

years, were never disturbed save by a few residents along their banks. The rivers and brooks themselves have been injured in many cases by erecting water-mills on them, which suddenly elevate or lower the level of the water, and in dry seasons often reduce the streams below their dams to a series of unconnected pools wherein fish fall easy victims to the tickling of village clowns. Country waters, for the most part, are free from the pollutions of manufactories and bleaching-works, which have ruined so many of the best rivers which flow near towns; but the improved character of modern agriculture often does them irretrievable damage. Washing sheep in them, with poisonous mixtures, is bad enough, but it is as nothing to the harm caused by drainage. This, first of all, lowers the rainfall of the district (especially when, as in all highly-farmed districts, the trees are cut down as well), and then, by suddenly flooding the streams and allowing the water to run off with almost equal rapidity, destroys the uniform level of its waters, shifts the gravel beds in the floods, and sweeps off large quantities of trout-spawn and also of the eggs of aquatic insects. Similarly, in the subsidence of the waters, these eggs are left high and dry, either to perish in the sun or be devoured by birds, so that the trout lose much of their natural aliment. The Tweed and several other Scotch streams, round which the hill-pastures have been largely drained for sheep, have especially suffered under the process. The only way to remedy the devastation caused by draining is by fishing associations being formed to protect the fish, as far as may be, from poaching, and by anglers, in the unselfish spirit of their patriarch, forbearing to take out undersized fish, and to kill fish for the base pleasure of catching the largest weight of trout. As for those angling clubs which propose prizes of six silver teaspoons or a new fishing-pannier for the greatest number and weight of fish taken in a day, they are cockney and unsportsmanlike in the highest degree. No genuine fisherman ought to demean himself by joining one.

An angler's malison being thus sped on fishing nuisances, ere the rod and tackle are lovingly dried, oiled, and laid on the shelf till next year, it is worth while noticing the wonderful improvements which have of late years been made in these implements of the craft. As in the battle of the guns, the more powerfully the means of offence were augmented, the defence was obliged to increase in like ratio, so is it with fly-fishing. The more suspicious the quarry becomes (and it is marvellous how crafty trout do become in a stream which is much fished, and where they are frequently pricked without being taken), the more cunningly must the angler prepare to circumvent them. The rods made of hazel, the outlandish flies and baits of our ancestors, and particularly their coarse running-tackle, would avail nothing at the present day in the Otter or Terne, though wielded by Will Wimble himself. In a curious woodcut in the *Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, the fish is being brought to shore by a fisherman using an apparatus like a flail, and the creature comes with as much confiding simplicity as gulls and noddies exhibit in flying to sailors on their first

landing on the remoter islands of the Pacific. Except with the finest tackle and best adjusted rods and the most deft manipulation, an angler will in vain attempt to capture trout in English streams at present. Another evil which results from drainage is that these are now rendered so clear, by the muddy, porter-like colour so dear to anglers, and which is due to floods, being run off in half the time it used to occupy in the process, that the fisherman's toil is much increased. The London rod-makers, however, and the many excellent provincial fly-tyers, herein come to his assistance. The improvements in these were specially noticed even at the Exhibition of 1851, and assuredly they have not since fallen off. Every season brings out a novelty, and though we are far from commending the indiscriminate use of these, a good fly-fisherman being always a conservative, nothing can be more absurd than for a man to ignore modern resources, and fabricate his own rods and flies. If he persist in doing so, however, we will treat him according to his humour, and present him in conclusion with a sure receipt to catch fish, extracted from a very rare and diminutive volume of 1652—Gervase Markham's *Young Sportsman's Instructor*. It will well match his archaic procedure, and we will charitably hope he may escape, if he use it, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which evidently did not trouble our forefathers.

"Smother a cat to death, then bleed him, and having flea'd and paunched him, roast him on a spit without larding, keeping the dripping to mix with the yolks of eggs, and an equal quantity of oil of spikenard; mix these well together, and anoint your line, hook, or bait therewith, and you will find 'em come to your content"—(p. 33.)

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## The Gonds and Bygas of the Eastern Sathpúras.

(CENTRAL PROVINCES. INDIA).

ALMOST every Indian official hails the advent of the cold season with joy and a sense of relief; it implies change of scene, and a temporary release from the hot close atmosphere of his room in the cutcherry or court-house; where for the last six months he has probably spent from eight to ten hours a day.

After all his sedentary work, there is something peculiarly attractive in the wandering camp life. Daily change of scene, the novelty of visiting wild outlying corners of his district, where possibly the foot of an Englishman has seldom trod before, the rides in the keen cold air of the early mornings—all act as a tonic, and serve to brace up his enervated frame and fit him for another strife with the Englishman's great enemy, the intense heat of the Indian summer.

From 1866 to 1869 my official work necessitated my leaving the civil station in November, and wandering through a wild and beautiful country, until the setting in of the rainy season, in June of the following year, drove me from camp. During this time a study of the wild nature of the Gond and Byga population, and their curious manners and customs, formed the pleasant occupation of the best part of my leisure hours. So little is known of the habitat of these Gonds and Bygas, that before speaking of their customs, a short description is necessary of the country they live in.

Since the amalgamation of Nagpore with the old Saugor Nerbudda territories, the whole has been formed, for administrative purposes, into a Chief Commissionership, under the name of the Central Provinces of India. The Sathpúra range of mountains, which runs almost the whole way across the Indian continent, bisects these provinces, and towards their eastern boundary culminates in a series of rugged, mountainous tracts and open plains, which quite surround the picturesque source of the river Nerbudda. The exact spot where this river rises is said to be on the plateau of Ummurkuntuk, at an elevation of 3,500 feet; it follows the plateau for a short distance, and then, by a bold leap of 80 feet, finds its way into the lower country. In the hills on either side of this river reside the Gonds and Bygas, until they merge—some 180 miles to the westward—in other tribes equally wild, and with many similar characteristics, but with different names and a different patois.

The view from Ummurkuntuk is a striking contrast to the usual arid plain scenery of India. For sixty miles there is a series of valleys, intersected by spurs from the main ranges of the Sathpúra hills, and watered by numerous streams, which, rising in the forests on the sides of these

hills, meander through grassy prairies, broken here and there with belts of forest-trees and patches of cultivation. The grass in these valleys continues green and luxuriant, after it has been burnt in February, until the setting in of the rainy season in June; while the rich foliage of the Sal (*Shorea robusta*), and the blaze of purple and white flowers on the geranium trees (*Bauhinia fragrans*), combine to add greatly to the varying beauties of the scene.

Perched high on the hills, in sheltered nooks well hidden from profane view, are the houses of the Byga race: the Gonds inhabit the valleys below, where their villages are marked out by a few rough wattle huts plastered with mud, surrounded by patches of maize and fields of their favourite crops, the grass-like millets (*Paspalum frumentaceum* and *scrobiculatum*).

The Bygas, both men and women, are wonderfully expert with the axe, not only in felling trees, but in using it as a weapon of offence. More than one authenticated case has come to my knowledge of a tiger being killed by Bygas. They are seldom, if ever, the aggressors; but when the tiger has seized one of their number, his companions have simultaneously rushed upon the animal and killed him with a quick succession of blows of their small axes. Their own saying is, that the Byga is born with an inherent knowledge of the use of an axe, and hatred to a tree; and they have a proverb to this effect—"Give a child an axe as soon as he can crawl, and the first thing he does is to hack at a tree." On one occasion, on arriving at the village where I meant to encamp, the men were all absent on a hunting expedition; at first the women were a little shy, but when they understood that grass for the horses and firewood were all the requirements of the camp, old and young turned out with their axes and small sickles, and soon brought in the requisite supplies. By way of recompence they asked to be allowed to look over the "Sahib's bungalows," never having seen a tent before. Their exclamations of surprise were amusing.

The real origin of the two races, Gond and Byga, is quite lost in obscurity. For many centuries the conquerors of the country have called them "Bhomeas,"—children of the soil; deriving the name from the Sanskrit word "Bhom,"—the earth, on the principle that they are sprung directly from the soil. The only place where I could find any record of them was in some of the mythological stories contained in the old Sanskrit legends; these will tell you that originally the Bhomeas comprised the whole population of the earth: inconvenience arose through all being on an equality, so a grand convocation was held. At this the ancestors of the present Bygas were elected to be priests and elders, receiving the name of Baghin, from "Bagh," tongue, and "In," light. From that day the "Baghins," or Bygas, have been the superiors, the authorities in all points of religious observance, and the arbiters in all questions connected with the soil. Every village especially retains the services of one Byga, and he is the great authority on all disputed points regarding the boundaries of forests and wastes. I have only once seen his fiat disputed, and on that occasion two Bygas differed in opinion as to the boundaries of

their respective village. Words ran so high that the villagers on each side turned out to back their respective champions, and not even the interference of the police could prevent a faction-fight.

The name of the Gonds is said, by the same authorities, to have been derived from the two Sanskrit words "Go," the earth, and "Un," body. The theory is that the Gonds were originally made out of the earth, mixed with the flesh and blood of one Rajal Bénou, a wicked king, through whose sins the whole population of the earth had been destroyed. Many other quaint legends regarding the origin of these people might be quoted, but they are all purely mythical and very obscure.

In numerical strength the Bygas count as about one to ten of the Gonds. Their physical appearance differs so much according to locality, that a description is not easy. The Byga of the eastern highlands near Ummurkuntuk is a far finer specimen of man than his namesake, who lives eighty miles farther west. In stature they are all below the average height of Europeans; but to the east the race has deteriorated comparatively little. Few specimens of a low type of civilization were met with. They were manly, having some pretensions to good looks, longish heads, somewhat aquiline features, remarkably small hands, and with hair and features almost anti-Mongolian. Further westward all these physical characteristics of higher civilization are lost. The men are much below the average height of Europeans—many are barely four feet high; dark complexion when compared with Hindoos, roundish heads, distended nostrils, wide mouths, thick lips, straight, unkempt black hair, scanty beard and moustache, and hair and features decidedly Mongolian.

The various sects have peculiar customs as to the manner of wearing the hair:—the "Mondhya" shave the entire head, only leaving one lock; the "Binjwar" never cut their hair, but wear it tied up in a knot behind. Occasionally, but rarely, a woolly crop like an African's is met with; and this is generally accompanied with a stunted physique, flat head, thick lips, and distended nostrils.

Their character, too, is affected by the locality as well as their appearance. In their native wilds they are fearless, independent, honest, and trustworthy. They do not hesitate to speak their mind freely and openly if they disagree with you: a rare characteristic among the poorer classes of these Eastern races when addressing officials. Their honesty was proverbial. A close search of the police records showed that for three years not one Byga from the east had been brought before our courts; and, as far as I could learn, the only crimes at all rife among them were those against social morality. To run away with a neighbour's wife is comparatively common and venial. The matter is brought before the patriarchs of the tribe, who award damages; the co-respondent has usually to supply the disconsolate husband with another wife, or funds sufficient to pay the expenses of a second wedding. Occasionally the business is compromised by the delinquent wife returning to her husband, while her paramour pays a small fine. None of these cases ever come into our

courts: the elders of the tribe constitute self-elected tribunals, whose judgments are upheld and their sentences carried out with praiseworthy regularity. In fact, the manner in which these Byga communities are managed is deserving of all praise. They live in the heart of the wilds, not from any fear of man, but because they prefer the hunter's life, free from restraint, to any more near approach to comparative civilization.

Very active and hardy, they are capital sportsmen. Armed only with a small bow, arrows poisoned with a decoction of the *Aconitum ferox*, and the axe, they do not hesitate to attack any of the *feræ naturæ* of the forest except the tiger. So keen is their eyesight, that they will follow the track of a wounded animal over hard rocky ground where to an ordinary observer there is not a trace to be seen; and so great is their perseverance and skill that, once struck, an animal is sure to fall into their hands. To be a successful shot is a safe road to their respect and admiration: that gained, to obtain information from them is comparatively easy; otherwise, they are very chary of speaking to strangers of their habits or customs, especially concerning their religious observances.

They are a simple people in the eastern wilds, very ignorant of the value of money, and dealing seldom in cash transactions. They have no luxuries, and, I may almost say, no wants, for their dress is very scanty and simple. The rupee is more often used as an ornament than a circulating medium, for they barter gums and other forest products for the little cloth, wool, and tobacco they require. They pay no taxes, for they have no income: until recently they used to commute the Government land revenue by an annual payment of sixpence an axe. This axe and a small sickle constitute their whole stock of agricultural implements. They raise enough millet by their destructive manner of cultivation to supply their food for the year, and should this crop fail, they eke out existence on the roots and berries of the forest and game. They dig iron ore out of the hills on which they live, and forge their axe-heads and sickles in the village.

Having to spend so many months of the year in camp, I considered myself fortunate in being located among so interesting a people. My endeavours to obtain a clear insight into their ways were so far successful, that after a time they did not object to my being present at their domestic ceremonies, and gradually the Byga priests supplied me with all the information they could give as to their curious system of tree-culture and spirit-worship.

All that they could tell did not throw much light on the subject, for even to the Bygas themselves it is extremely vague and mysterious; but the contrast between their acknowledged hatred of trees as a rule, and their deep veneration of certain others in particular, is very curious.

I have seen hill-sides swept clear of forests for miles, with but here and there a solitary tree left standing. These remain now the objects of the deepest veneration; so far from being injured, they are carefully preserved, and receive offerings of food, clothes, or flowers from the passing Byga, who firmly believes that tree to be the home of a spirit.

Their religion may be said to be essentially spirit-worship. They people the forests, rivers, and mountains with spirits, sometimes regarded as protectors, but considered usually to have a decided inclination to evil. To some they give names such as "the great god," the "sun-god," the "god of small-pox;" others have local names which hardly bear translation. Among some of the tribes the earth is the chief object of worship, under the name of "Mai Dirthi." At every meal a portion of the food is poured on the ground as a libation to her, and in sacrifices the blood is given to her.

Of the sun-god I could discover but little. They did not appear to have any real conception of the sun as a god, though they looked upon it as a mighty power; they never to my knowledge worshipped it or made offerings to it, yet they speak of it with reverence as "Suraj Déo," and perhaps perform certain rites in its honour which I had no opportunity of seeing. Possibly the sun is associated in their minds so much with light and warmth that they have come to reverence it as a deity. Certainly, in whatever theories of future existence they possess, sunrise and sunset occupy an important part. They speak of the home of their gods and spirits as existing far away between the north and the east, and in their graves the corpse is laid with its feet in that direction; the understanding is, that should there be another existence in the world beyond, the face will be looking in the right direction.

Burial is not enforced, for as a rule all old men are burnt, while young men, women, and children are buried. Cremation, while looked on as the most honourable mode of disposing of the corpse, is not considered to affect the spirits of the dead—they are supposed to haunt the habitations of the living equally with the spirits of those who are buried.

The worship of dead ancestors holds a place of high importance in their ceremonies. The spirit of the deceased head of the house is supposed to abide with the inmates and watch over them. Sometimes the ashes are preserved tied up in a piece of cloth and hung up to the rafters; a portion of the daily food is set apart for the spirit's use, and in any business of importance his aid is always invoked. This spirit is believed to linger on earth for an indefinite period, and to have especial charge of the household from which he has been removed by death. In some places, for two years after death, the manes of the dead ancestor is the only deity invoked, and to him all offerings and sacrifices are made. After the full accomplishment of this period of probation on earth, these elders are supposed to exist as spirits in the home of the deities.

Until quite recently the bodies of the deceased members of the family were buried within the precincts of the house; a curious custom which, in common with the worship of dead ancestors, the author of *Aryan Civilization* tells us was very much in vogue with the ancient Greeks and Latins. He quotes Servius to the effect that "until the number of the dead became too great they were buried in the house itself."

The spirits of small-pox and cholera are among the Déos most feared.

It is a strange fact that not only the Gonds, but both Hindoos and Mussulmen of comparatively much higher civilization and of better education, attribute to the Byga priests the power of prevailing over the spirits of evil, and inducing the cholera to leave a town which it has been afflicting. At Mundlah, in 1868, I saw the best effects follow the Byga ceremony; the ten thousand inhabitants of all castes had such perfect confidence in the efficacy of the remedy, that they lost much of that terror which predisposed them to take the disease.

The Bygas work on the principle of the scapegoat. Subscriptions are raised among the inhabitants to provide a sufficient number of fowls, and on a certain night the people are warned not to leave their houses between sunset and sunrise under pain of death, for the spirit of cholera is supposed to accompany the Bygas and to seize all persons not especially protected. The procession marches round the town, the head priest draws a straw from the thatch of every house, and proceeds outside the village to the shrine which has been prepared for the occasion. There he burns the straws with a little rice, turmeric and butter; the fowls are smeared with vermilion and driven out into the smoke and darkness as scapegoats, the spirit of the disease is supposed to accompany them and to be guided by their wanderings as to the place to be next attacked. No one would wittingly ever have anything to do with these animals again, and to meet them on the night of the ceremony is equivalent to certain death in Byga theory.

The belief in the supernatural power of the Bygas received a large increase on the occasion I am speaking of; for, through a curious coincidence, it happened that the only two persons who were known to have left their houses during the night of the ceremony were attacked with cholera. I shall long remember the face of the policeman who had to report to me the next morning that these two were the only fresh cases!

If the fowl sacrifice is inefficacious pigs are tried, and are said never to fail. Sometimes goats are substituted for fowls.

When either small-pox or cholera first appears, their visit is the signal for a thorough cleansing of the whole village: the sweepings are carefully collected and transferred beyond the boundary on to some road or path leading to a neighbouring town or hamlet. The refuse must be thrown into a frequented roadway, as the disease has to be carried away by some passer-by before the afflicted village can benefit by its purification.

This theory of transference of disease to passers-by is by no means singular to these people. Tylor speaks of it as extant in many countries of Europe,\* and Captain Burton suggests that the rags hung on trees near sacred places in almost all countries of the world are deposited there as actual receptacles of disease.

These wild tribes, in common with most of the residents of the Nerbudda Valley, endeavour to account for the origin of cholera by the peculiar theory that it is caused by the spirit of one Hurdoo Lalla, who,

\* *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii. p. 137.



about the beginning of the present, or the end of the last, century, was Rajah of one of the Bundelcund principalities. He was poisoned, and ever since is believed to have been gifted with the power of doing evil: this power he exercises chiefly in producing outbreaks of cholera; so on every occasion they endeavour to propitiate his troubled spirit with the sacrifice of a fowl, or, on great emergencies, of a pig.

The blood is the portion of the spirit, while the devotees and the priests eat the flesh. It is curious how entirely the theory held by these people of the manner in which their sacrifices are accepted coincides with that described by Tylor,\* as held by the Fijians, Zulus, and others in the opposite quarters of the globe. The Byga priests have given me almost word for word the same idea as to the ethereal nature of the spirit and its consequent acceptance, not of the material offering, but of its soul or essence, as Tylor describes in the following words: "The deity is considered to take actual possession of the food or other objects offered . . . by abstraction of their life, savour, essence, quality, and, in yet more definite conception, their spirit or soul."

The Byga is essentially a spirit-worshipper: he shows his profound belief in this doctrine in every action of his life; and although there are instances in which he professes to worship idols, I concluded, from his careless manner, that he was only taking advantage on those occasions of the simplicity of his brethren for purposes of priestcraft.

In passing through a dense forest, I have seen the Byga turn aside before some tree or rock, the home, in his belief, of some one of his deities, and bending his head with reverent gesture, implore the protection of the spirit on his undertaking; and offer up, if he has brought nothing else with him for the purpose, a fragment torn off his own scanty garment.

On hunting expeditions they will promise a sacrifice of flesh if successful, and occasionally will go through a regular form of prayer and vow to sacrifice a fowl if the animal they are in search of falls. They firmly believe that some of the tribe have the gift of divination, and the greatest confidence is always shown in their prayers for success. After beating a jungle for hours in search of a tiger, they will ask for a halt, and the diviners will disappear into some ravine to consult the oracle: if they return promising success, the beaters will go to work with such enthusiasm that not a bush is left untouched, and consequently the search is often successful: if, on the contrary, the diviners report that the spirit is unpropitious it is useless to go on; the men become so careless and dispirited that they would probably fail to rouse the animal even if he was in the cover.

These medicine men are also believed to have the power of calling tigers by placing certain herbs on the head of an animal that has been killed: the hunter watches the carcase from a safe position in a tree above, and so obtains a deadly shot when the unsuspecting tiger comes to finish his meal. The services of these gifted individuals are in great

\* *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii. pp. 352-6.

repute on these occasions and command quite a high price: still they profess great reluctance to perform the ceremony, as formerly the tiger was one of their objects of worship, and was looked upon as a roaming spirit of evil. The large rewards offered by Government for their destruction have stimulated the cupidity of both Bygas and Gonds until it has overcome their reverence, so that I once saw a drunken Gond with his arms round a dead tiger's neck, addressing it by every term of endearment and abuse in his vocabulary; ending by kicking the beast with the remark, "We used to worship you! then you were powerful, now here is a Sahib come who pulls your tails and shoots you like dogs!" Once, however, let the tiger kill a man and he is immediately invested with a halo of sanctity: the spirit of his victim is supposed to watch over him, caution him against danger, and largely increase his powers of intelligence and ferocity.

On one occasion I found a Gond tied to the bough of a tree by his clothes, half-dead with fatigue and fright: when sufficiently recovered he told me that while watching a waterhole for deer a tiger had come to drink with a spirit sitting on his head; the Gond raised his matchlock, but it was pulled out of his hand by the spirit and broken; the tiger made a spring at him, but could not reach him, and he then fainted, not recovering until it was broad daylight. Had I not come up, I believe he would have died, for his state of terror was pitiable.

Laying the spirits of people thus killed by tigers is one of the duties of the Byga priests: and it is a curious fact that their power in this matter is firmly believed in, not only among themselves, but by all the Hindoos who live in their neighbourhood.

When a man has been killed, the Byga of the village is at once sent for, a subscription is raised to pay the necessary expenses (from four to ten shillings usually), and the Byga purchases the necessary offerings. With these he proceeds to the "Pât," or sacred place in the jungle nearest the spot where the man has been killed, and offers a sacrifice to the spirit of the locality; he then goes to the exact place where the man met his death, and performs a series of peculiar antics, supposed to represent the tiger seizing his victim; the ceremony is completed by his taking up in his mouth some of the blood-stained earth and swallowing it. After this the spirit is supposed to be at rest. The test of success is that the officiating Byga is not himself carried off within the next week. Not an unlikely thing to happen, as the Byga has to perform his duties alone and unarmed.

With the exception of these man-eaters, the Bygas are not afraid of tigers as a rule; they make them a bow when they chance to meet, and stand still until they have passed.

Of ghosts in a bodily form they have little fear; they travel at night through the wildest forests and among scenery of itself sufficient in its grand solitude to cause a sense of awe to superstitious natures, but they seem to have little dread of unearthly enemies. The only visible spirit I could ever hear of was that of the man killed by the tiger; and as long as

he "walked" nothing would induce people to go into the jungle either by day or night.

I only discovered three specimens of anything resembling idolatry among the Bygas; two occurred near the same place in one of the wildest parts of the Mandla district. At a village named Jata, a tree of the *Zizyphus Jujuba* species, growing on the bank of a small stream, is pointed out as the favoured residence of the idol, which divides its time between the bough of the tree, or a stone slab underneath it, and the bed of the neighbouring stream. This idol is no image, but a few links of an old iron chain, very roughly forged and apparently of considerable antiquity; each of its movements is made the occasion of a ceremony, when the resident Byga priest reaps the fruits of such offerings as are made to it. The Gonds of the village look upon it as their protective spirit, and consider its removal from the tree into the bed of the stream as a sign of danger to themselves; they cannot, however, complain of being priest-ridden to any large extent, for these movements of their Déo occur but seldom.

The next is a very similar case in the same neighbourhood, only instead of a chain an old sword-blade partly embedded in a rock is the deity. The wild scenery which surrounds the hill where this idol is placed adds greatly to the feelings of veneration and respect with which it is regarded by the people. Apparently in some former period of the world's history the scene of a vast volcano, the country is rugged and inaccessible, cut up with deep and dark ravines, in which the spirits of evil are supposed to have taken up their abodes. The chasms in the rocks, the numerous caves, and the dark passages deep into the bowels of the earth are enough of themselves to foster superstition and to account for the dread with which the few visitors look upon the place and its presiding Déo; without taking into account the fact that they believe the wild animals, whose traces abound, to be either the ministers of the evil spirits or occasionally the spirits themselves in bodily form. Here again the Byga is the priest in charge, and reaps the benefit of all offerings and sacrifices.

The third case is more common among the Gonds than the Bygas. A small shed is set up outside the village, a long bamboo or pole with a red rag at the end is planted in the corner, and a few blocks of rough uncut stone are scattered about; one or two of these are smeared with vermilion, and the whole forms the shrine of Gunsham Déo, who is supposed to be the especial protector of the harvests. In November the villagers assemble to do him honour; fowls and spirits, or, if the village is large, a pig, are sacrificed, and suddenly one man in the assembly is seized with vertigo; he staggers round and round for a while, and then rushes away into the thickest jungle. When pursued and brought back, he is found quite out of his mind, with his clothes torn from his back and his flesh scored by the thorns through which he has forced his way; he seems to feel nothing, and does not recover from his cataleptic state for a day or two. His own explanation is, that Gunsham Déo came and sat upon his head, forcing him to hide himself, lest he should be sacrificed for the sins of the village.

The sufferings are too genuine to admit of a doubt of their reality, and I could never discover any sign of collusion between the victim and the priests.

It was not easy to obtain reliable information regarding all their peculiar forms of marriage, for at first these simple people looked with distrust on my inquiries; as, however, they gained confidence, I learnt all they had to tell, and was present at more than one of their weddings. First, in the selection of a wife the claims of the man's own relations have to be considered; for marriage between cousins is almost compulsory when the brother's child is a daughter, and the sister's a son. When the positions are reversed, it is not so much a matter of duty as expediency; for the theory is, that by these marriages relations are provided for, for life, and it is the bounden duty of every man to look to the well-being of his relatives. The women are allowed a voice in this important matter, though as a rule they are not allowed to interfere in any way. The wife having been chosen, the question of dower has next to be settled between the parents of the contracting parties. For this there is a regular scale laid down; the number of rupees to be paid varies with the number of Déos worshipped by the bride's father; these never exceed nine, and are seldom less than four: with this sum of money a supply of rice, pulse, salt, and spirits is sent, and four cloths for wearing-apparel. The bridegroom's family has to bear all the expenses, so provides everything necessary for the wedding feast. The four cloths are allotted to the bride, her mother, her father's mother, and her brother's wife, if she has these relatives living; if not, the number of cloths is reduced. The bride's trousseau consists of what she stands in, with the exception of the ornaments, which are often borrowed for the occasion. Settlements there are none; if the girl is an heiress, on her marriage she endows her husband with all her worldly goods, and in case of her death, he inherits.

The terms decided, an auspicious day for the ceremony has to be fixed by the family priest: the Byga usually decides the point: thus:—he places himself in the centre of a circle with a small brass water-pot between his knees, and a grain of rice in each hand:—over these he mutters incantations, and drops both into the water at the same time; if they meet in the water it is a sign that the day selected is propitious; if not, another day is chosen, and so on, until the two grains do meet. The delay in bringing about this meeting entirely depends on the fees paid to the Byga.

The celebration of their marriages is a pretty sight, but the description of one will suffice for all.

In February, 1869, my tents were pitched close to the village of Mowye: Sookhia (Anglicé, "her parent's joy,") was to be married to Boodhoo (Wednesday), the son of Chaitoo (the month of June), one of the elders of the village: Sookhia was the daughter of Mungloo (Tuesday), a respected member of the community.

The day before the wedding the men of both families had been actively engaged in erecting in front of the two houses small sheds of fresh-cut

boughs; in the centre of each of these a branch of a mango-tree was planted, and an earthen pot of water placed by it; the ground is carefully swept, and then flowers and grass are spread on it. With early dawn the women are astir, the village square is swept clean, fresh grass and flowers are strewn in the little houses, and presently the women, with their water-pots, start for the spring to fetch water for their households, and at the same time to bathe and array themselves in their gala dresses. Sookhia was about sixteen years old, fair and well formed for her age: she looked quite pretty as she returned from her bath dressed in her bridal finery: this was very simple, consisting of only two cloths, one round the waist, looped up a little below the knee—the other was worn shawl-wise across the back and bosom; both were new and white with merely a pink fringe round the edge. Her long black hair was plaited in coils round her head, with the addition of a few frisettes of dyed sheep's wool; the effect was a little marred as the shades did not quite match; still I have seen quite as much difference of colour in some of the heads in "the Row." Strings of pink and white glass beads, with here and there a false ruby, were twined in the hair, and worn round the neck. When passing my tent she was made happy with the gift of a rupee. This was at once taken to the blacksmith, pierced, and, later in the day, worn round the neck as an additional ornament. About eight o'clock the two Byga priests appeared and took up their positions, one in each of the "little houses" that had been yesterday prepared for the purpose. Their dress is easily disposed of; it consisted of their own hair, and a very small cloth round the loins, barely sufficient for decency. (I once heard a Byga's ordinary dress very aptly described as consisting of solely a powder horn and green tassel.) The musicians, who had been collected from all the neighbourhood, for the occasion, had succeeded in making night hideous by beating their small drums, or tom-toms, blowing cow-horns, brass serpents, and braying through a wire instrument something like a magnified comb. During the morning the relations and guests came dropping in until the village began to look quite gay. About noon Boodhoo's brother Bysakhoo (the month of May) carried over the dower presented by the bridegroom; then the marriage procession was organized. The musicians led the way, the bridegroom and his immediate relatives come next, the guests follow; the music strikes up, the men shout, the women sing a couplet, apparently composed of only the names of the bride and bridegroom, and in this order they proceed to Mungloo's house, and seat themselves round the "little house;" into this Boodhoo alone enters, the Byga priest takes him and Sookhia by the hand, leads them three times round, touches the heads of both with oil and turmeric, and then places Sookhia on Bysakhoo's back; Boodhoo follows close, the marriage procession closes in behind, and the bride is carried thus to her future home. Here the same ceremonies are again gone through, and the Byga priest completes his duties by tying the clothes of the pair together. The guests then retire, leaving the happy couple in the little house, and adjourn to Mungloo's

house; there I regret to say they improved the occasion by making merry so thoroughly, that most of them became exceedingly drunk before nightfall.

When a youth is too poor to pay any dower and wants a wife, he binds himself to serve the girl's father as Jacob served Laban; the time varies from eight months to five years, and during that period all intercourse between the two is forbidden. The youth is the household drudge, hewer of wood, drawer of water; he looks after the cattle, or performs any other menial work. When serving his uncle for his cousin, he begins younger and serves longer than if apprenticed to a stranger; the theory is that the uncle will not exact such hard service from his nephew, the tie of relationship among these people being very binding. When the time is completed the same ceremonial is gone through, the bride's father paying all expenses.

It occasionally happens that the girl declines to marry the youth whom her parents have selected; she then has to take matters into her own hands and make a runaway match. As, theoretically, it is allowed that she has the right of selection, the elders of the village endeavour to arrange the business amicably; but the parents of the girl are generally obliged to withhold their consent, having promised her to some one else; so to avoid feuds they remain passive. The girl meets her lover and declares her intention of becoming his wife; she anoints his head with turmeric, and touches his feet; he then takes her to his father's house and marries her from there if his parents will pay the expenses; if not, he puts on her arms a pair of bangles, the Gond symbol of a wedding-ring, gives a dinner to the elders of his village and takes the girl home.

The compulsory marriage is a curious custom arising from these runaway matches. After the girl has taken up her abode with the husband of her choice, it is considered the right thing for the man whom she has deserted to assert his rights and carry her off by force if he can. Not only may he do this, but any one of the girl's first-cousins, if he have the power, may abduct her forcibly and keep her himself. The attempt is seldom made, unless the girl has made an objectionable match, for an abduction of this sort entails much trouble, and gives rise to many feuds.

Where the woman is very poor and has no relative whom her would-be husband could serve for her, marriage reduces itself into an agreement to live together. The requisite pair of bangles is given to the girl, who takes up her abode in the man's house, and to all intents and purposes they become man and wife.

Sometimes the woman gives the man no option: to use their own expression she goes to his house and "sits down there." He is bound to keep her, unless some other man takes her off his hands. But objections are seldom raised, for the women are all good labourers, and more than pay for their keep.

Widows are expected, as a matter of course, to remarry. They either live with some relation of the deceased husband, or select some man of



their acquaintance with whom they agree to live. The ceremonials at these second marriages are very meagre,—a feast to the elders and a pair of new bangles constitute the whole.

These people are all polygamists; the number of wives is often the gauge of a man's respectability: and a farmer with from four to seven is considered well to do—a warm man. Three is a common number, to exceed that requires more of this world's goods than they usually possess. In former days the Mahratta government used to make capital out of the system of widow remarriage. All widows came to be considered the property of the state, and a certain tax was imposed on their marriages; its incidence varied according to age and accomplishments: the rare occurrence of a virgin widow was specially provided for and rated very high.

There are few peculiarities attendant on the birth of children:—the village band is summoned to make music, and on the eighth day, when the child and its mother are bathed, a grand sacrifice is offered to the household gods to make up for the neglect with which they have been treated during the whole period of gestation. The child is named from some peculiarity either of its birth or appearance: their supply of names is so small that the days of the week and month are continually in use, and it is easy to run through a year's calendar in the names of the men of one village. This system tends to create confusion, and to the use of nicknames; every personal peculiarity is at once seized and adopted as a prefix, such as long, short, black, six-toed, &c. The chief reason for this scarcity of names is the total absence of any kind of literature among them: songs with any meaning the Bygas have none; though the Purahan tribe, which bears a very close affinity to the Gond, has a plentiful stock. Some of these have been reduced to writing and translated, but they require great alteration and addition before they become intelligible to our ears. Mr. Gover, in his *Folk-Lore of the People of the Madras Presidency*, mentions as a curious fact that the hill tribes have no songs. These people seem much the same, for I have never yet heard a Byga attempt to sing except when he was half drunk and wholly unintelligible.

It is much to be regretted that people with so many good characteristics and so much that is honest and truthful in them to compel our admiration, should be so destructive in their habits as to necessitate especial measures of restraint. With every anxiety to improve their position and preserve them from that eventual extinction which the inflexible law of nature appears to force on as the fate of all wild races when brought into contact with civilization, it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to do much to save them. Their theories of cultivation are so diametrically opposed to all ideas of forest conservancy, that we have been forced to endeavour our utmost to alter their habits and teach them a less wasteful style of agriculture. These measures are the more necessary as they had been already too long delayed, and the forests had been devastated in a manner they will not recover for generations; and, although the policy of the present Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces is very liberal, and he is

most anxious that changes should be introduced as slowly and gradually as possible, still the Byga is a thorough conservative, and objects most strongly to change on principle. For his fields he requires an acre or two of well-wooded country; he cuts down the trees and, when dry, sets fire to them; in the ashes the seed is sown, and yields a very prolific crop with comparatively little exertion. No ploughings are required, fencing is simple, and managed at the same time as the felling operation; these advantages, with his hunter's tastes, preference for patriarchal government, and the generally inaccessible nature of his wild home, suit him much better than larger profits obtained with greater exertion and a more close contact with civilization. They certainly have many enemies to fight with, but this only adds a little excitement to their life. If a herd of bison breaks through the fence they will devastate the whole field; but probably the very next night the Byga will have his revenge, and supply all the village with beef, by driving the bison on to a line of broad-bladed spears, buried judiciously to receive the animals exactly where they will land on jumping the fence. With deer in the same way it is one continual strife, in which man, as a rule, is successful, and draws large additions to his daily food from the would-be marauders, for the Byga is extremely cunning in the setting of traps and nooses.

They have lately, however, had to suffer severely from the depredations of a mad elephant, which has been wandering through the valleys of the Upper Nerbudda for the last four years. Visitors of this description are rare on the northern side of the Sathpura range, though to the south elephants are fairly plentiful; when this animal first appeared he was comparatively harmless, never wantonly attacked human beings, but contented himself with occasionally knocking down a house and feasting on the grain inside. At one time it took a violent antipathy to the masonry boundary pillars which had been erected at considerable expense for the purpose of demarcating the Government Forests. Whether this was merely an elephantine way of taking up his protest against the advance of British civilization, or their bright whitewashed appearance induced him to knock the pillars over in a fit of irritation, it is not easy to say. I made several unsuccessful attempts to come to close quarters with the animal, but never succeeded; he travelled such great distances that, if here to-day, he would be forty miles off the next morning. About two years ago he took a violent dislike to man; wherever he found man, woman or child, he pursued them in the most bloodthirsty manner, and crushed them to death, apparently with no other object but pleasure in their wanton destruction.

The natives gave the animal the credit of devouring his victims, but this turned out a popular fallacy, engendered by the dread and horror his ravages caused among a people so ill able to resist them, and the frightful manner in which he mangled and crushed the bodies.

No English sportsman was for a long time able to fall in with him, and every attempt made by natives to compass his destruction only resulted in the death of one if not more of their party. Recently its

ravages became so formidable that a very determined and successful attempt was made by the Deputy Commissioner of Balaghat to destroy it; he followed the beast for, I believe, more than sixty miles, and finally succeeded in shooting it; from the account he published in the *Field*, it appears that the animal did not die as gamely as might have been expected from his vicious habits and previous hatred of man; but most probably the first shots were placed so judiciously that they disabled him.

In a country where the houses have walls built of basket-work the ravages of an infuriated animal of this description may well be imagined; especially as the Byga, with all his pluck and activity, is no match for an animal off whom his poisonous arrows would probably drop without making a wound.

Thus, although these people have many dangers to meet, and might by mere exertion improve their condition of life, they refuse to be weaned from their lives in the forests, or to take advantage of the means placed at their hands by a bountiful Providence. Land is in abundance, to be had for the asking, and the soil is so fertile that if man will but exert himself there is hardly any limit to its capacity; but rational cultivation entails labour; as the Byga says, there is always something to be done: there are so many ploughings at various seasons; then the rice is no sooner sown than it has to be weeded; the country is so well peopled that it has to be continually watched, first to keep cattle off when it is growing, then to keep men from gathering it when it is ripe. Now with their own favourite staple, millet, the crop once sown is so hardy it requires no care; weeds do little harm; the country is too wild for human trespassers; and as far as the deer tribe is concerned, it is a continual trial of skill between the animals and their hunters. So they sow their crop after a few days of very hard labour, and leave the rest to nature, devoting all their spare time to the chase, a pursuit they thoroughly enjoy.

Their life in the forest has a certain zest which would be lost were they to take to the open country, so that it is easy to understand how they put off the evil day as long as possible and prefer the free hunter's life of comparative poverty to one of greater restraint with more of this world's goods.

On being pressed on this point the Byga elders have always acknowledged the force of the argument, but pleaded objection to change; want of a leader to give them the necessary instruction; and finally, by way of silencing me, begged that I would resign my post under Government and accept the position of leader and instructor of the Bygas! they promising to supply my every want, including the requisite number of wives.

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## The Vicissitudes of the Escorial.

Of the great historical edifices of the sixteenth century, the Escorial is more strongly stamped than any other with the character of its age, country, and founder. Its vast size, its harmonious design, and the uniform ashy hue of its granite walls, invest it with an air of solemn grandeur which accords well with its melancholy site on the slope of the Guadarama range, and with the sombre story of Philip II. Begun in 1562, and completed in 1584,\* it stands, or lately stood, in all external features as it did when Philip died there in 1598. During the greater part of his reign, artists and artificers of all kinds were busy on its internal decorations, and cases filled with all that was rich and rare, pictures, statuary, and bronzes from Italy, tapestry from the Netherlands, plate from Nuremberg and Milan, saintly relics from many a distant shrine, were constantly arriving from all parts of the world. It was long the treasury of the artistic wealth of the Spanish crown. Philip III. began, and Philip IV. finished, the noble subterranean hall in which repose the Austrian and Bourbon kings and their queens who have given them heirs. The sum spent by Philip II. on the Escorial is estimated at about 6,000,000 ducats, or about one million sterling; and the Pantheon cost his son and grandson about 100,000*l.* more: both small sums when compared with the cost of many meaner works in our days. The building contained a convent, a college, a school, a very noble church, and a tolerable palace. From the days of the founders to those of Joseph Bonaparte, the religious services of the temple were performed by a long line of Jeromite friars, with a magnificence worthy of their splendid abode. The palace was frequently inhabited by the Spanish kings of both houses; and Philip V., though health compelled him to take refuge amongst the woods and waters of San Ildefonso, used to say that he was as proud of his Escorial as of his crown.

The Escorial has suffered severely and often from lightning and fire. Seven years before its completion, on the night of the 21st of July, 1577, a tremendous storm burst over the rising edifice. Lightning struck it in various places simultaneously. Some picture-frames and robes were set on fire in a sacristy; a rent was made in the wall of an upper room; and the western tower, now called the *Botica*, was wrapped in flames. The woodwork of the tower, with its leaden roof and eleven bells, were com-

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\* The site was prepared in 1562-63; the first stone being laid on 23rd of April, 1563, and the last on the 13th September, 1584. The architects were Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera. One master of the works, Fray Antonio de Villacastin, superintended the building from its commencement to its completion.

pletely destroyed, and a staircase below was blocked up by the streams of molten metal. Philip II., who was staying in the neighbourhood, was soon on the spot, attended by the veteran Duke of Alba, who, in spite of his gout, took command of the crowd of workmen and spectators whom the conflagration had attracted. Having organized lines of men to hand the buckets of water, he directed the action of the fire-engines, indicated the doors and windows over which wet blankets were to be spread, and posted himself in an adjacent tower from whence to issue his further orders. Two soldiers, who had escaped from captivity at Constantinople, especially distinguished themselves by the skill and daring with which they seconded their veteran leader. Many of the persons engaged were for tearing down the adjacent roofs; but the master of the works, Fray Antonio de Villacastin, resolutely forbade it, saying the walls of his tower were strong enough to imprison the fire, and the ball and cross of the tower would fall, not on the building, but on the ground below. His prediction was verified at six in the morning of the 22nd of July, when the pious King retired to his oratory, to thank God for the extinction of the fire.

In 1642, one of the corner towers was shattered by a thunderbolt; and a similar accident happened to another in 1650. Ere the pile was a century old it had a narrow escape from total destruction.

In the afternoon of the 7th of June, 1671, a chimney in the college near the north-west angle took fire; a strong north-wind rising soon afterwards carried some sparks amongst the timbers of the adjacent roof, and the vast edifice continued to burn for no less than fifteen days. A great part of the roof of the entire building was destroyed, and the belfry, with a fine peal of bells, perished. The church, of which the noble dome is the crown and centre of the structure, was in great danger, and the Holy Sacrament had to be carried off at midnight to a place of safety. Canon Quevedo, the latest historian of the Escorial, writing of the event in 1854, thus moralizes upon the removal of the sacred wafer:—"The presence of Almighty God, accompanied by a few monks, and illuminated by the splendour of the furious conflagration which threatened to destroy His holy tabernacle, was a deeply afflicting sight; religion multiplied the terrors of the scene; all were in tears; for it seemed as if in this transit of God himself as a fugitive from peril, all hope of rescue was taken away."\* An immense amount of valuable property was destroyed, including a precious library of Oriental manuscripts, which, by an odd chance, was ignited from the great Turkish standard made of cotton, captured in the Turkish admiral's ship at Lepanto. The damage done to the building was estimated at 90,000*l.*, and the repairs took four years to accomplish. One-third of the cost was defrayed by the King, Charles II., and two-thirds were provided out of the revenues of the Jeronite

\* *Historia del Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial escrita por el ex-Bibliothecario de S. M. en dicho Monasterio, Don José Quevedo, Canónigo de Badajoz.* Madrid, 1854, 8vo. p. 125.

brotherhood, thanks to the energy and administrative ability of Fray Marcos de Herrera, their Prior. The long continuance of the fire led to a general belief in Europe that the great monument of Philip II. was no more. A brief and meagre abridgment of the work of Los Santos\* was published in London, entitled *The Escorial; or, a description of that wonder of the world built by King Philip II., and lately consumed by fire. Translated into English by a Servant of the Earl of Sandwich in his Extraordinary Embassie.* London, 1671.

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On the 1st of September, 1744, the building was again struck by lightning, which ignited a quantity of bark used for tanning, and the store of firewood, and consumed an interior court, and the entire conventual provision of corn and flour. Ferdinand VI., in consideration of the loss sustained by the fathers, conferred upon them some Indian preferment or revenues.

On the 18th of November, 1755, the shock of the famous earthquake which laid Lisbon in ruins, was distinctly felt at the Escorial. The fine brass chandelier which hung from the vaulted roof of the church-choir was observed to vibrate for several minutes. The admirable solidity of the building withstood the subterranean commotion, and no rent or subsidence was discovered in any portion of it. But the monks were afterwards in the habit of singing, on the anniversary of the occasion, a special *Te Deum* for the preservation of their house.

On the 8th of October, 1763, a fire broke out towards evening in one of the upper stories, in the magazine of wax and torches, and blazed with great vehemence. The night was fortunately calm, and the fire being arrested by the thick wall of the tower of the *Seminario*, was soon extinguished. Charles III. gave 5,000*l.* towards the restoration.

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family and the popular manifestations which followed them, the Escorial became the scene. In the various military occupations which followed, it is remarkable that a building which appears predisposed to conflagration, should have escaped injury by fire. In March, 1808, the vanguard of Murat's army was there, and General Barbou, with 3,000 or 4,000 men, was quartered in the *Seminario*. Soon after the famous "*Dos de Mayo*" massacres in the capital, preparations were commenced for turning the Escorial into a military hospital, but they were stopped by the retreat of the French. On the 4th of December, however, the invaders were once more in possession of the Castilles, and the place was occupied by General La Houssaye and two regiments of dragoons. A decree of Joseph Bonaparte excepting the Escorial from the general suppression of convents, gave the Jeronites some hopes of a quiet life, hopes which were soon blasted by an order to quit, from which only a few of the older fathers were afterwards exempted. In 1809 one Quilliet, a Frenchman, whom Joseph had appointed Conservator of the Monuments of Art in the Royal palaces of Spain, or, in other words, his private plunder collector, appeared at the Escorial with a royal order for the removal to Madrid of all the precious objects in the house, with the exception of articles in gold and silver. Three hundred cart-loads of pictures and statuary were soon afterwards packed and carried off. Next year the gold and silver followed, all but a few things which the monks contrived to hide. This rich harvest was reaped by a couple of Spanish commissioners, by the aid of a list furnished by Quilliet, who was the presiding genius of the spoliation. This man had visited the Escorial in 1807, at the beginning of the invasion, and had wormed himself into the confidence of the poor monks by diatribes against the French Emperor, and by circulating a paper called *Napoleon unmasked*. Pleased with his opinions and his taste, they showed him all their valuables and curiosities, and, like their sovereign and his family, found when too late what it was to trust a *gavacho*. The removal of the fine library was entrusted to Antonio Conde, the well-known Arabic scholar, who, though a partisan of the French, had some national feeling left, and, by a trick, saved the manuscripts from transportation to France. Packing them carefully in boxes, he deposited them in the convent of La Trinidad at Madrid, and then buried them beneath a mighty pile of the printed books, which, as being less valuable, were brought from the Escorial in open baskets. For five years this mass of learning lay in dust and darkness, and being forgotten by the invaders, was returned in due time to the Escorial, the MSS. to their proper chamber, and the printed volumes to display, according to the fashion of the place, their gilt edges to the visitor of the library, a fashion noted with praise by an Italian traveller in 1650, as making the walls seem "clothed with gold from floor to roof."\* On the 12th July, Joseph Bonaparte slept at the palace when on the way to his disasters in the

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north. Wellington was at the Escorial on the 9th September, and in and about the place there were, about this time, 40,000 British and Portuguese troops. The upper library was occupied by 200 English soldiers, employed in making shoes; and the whole building, being filled with their comrades, probably ran greater risks of fire than at any previous epoch of its history.

In 1826, a fire, raging for eighteen hours, destroyed a considerable portion of the Escorial between the church and the Ladies' Tower, including one of the belfries. The building still bore many cruel marks of its barrack days. By this fire Ferdinand VII. was induced to come to its relief, and he is said to have spent on it about 8,000*l.*, his pious second queen, Mary Amelia of Saxony, also presenting the Geronomites with a custodia of gold and jewels worth 10,000*l.* The building in Ferdinand's time was, however, still further stripped of its artistic possessions, in order to furnish the Royal Museum of Pictures at Madrid.

In the spring of 1836, during the civil war, apprehensions of a Carlist raid caused, or were used as a pretext to excuse, the removal to the capital of nearly all the remaining pictures and other portable works of art. In June the monks were ordered to lay aside their monastic dress, and assume the habits of secular priests; and on the 29th November, 1837, the whole brotherhood received notice to leave the country. By the evening of December 1st, sixty old men, all over seventy, were turned adrift to shift for themselves, and a few days later the furniture of their cells was sold for the benefit of the Government, and produced 8,000 reals, or about 80*l.* sterling. The Prior alone kept his place, under the name of Abbot-Administrator, at the head of sixteen chaplains, of whom he was to have the choice. But they also were dismissed in 1838, and the care of the building given to a few priests living in the town.

In 1840 the Escorial, thus deserted, showed such alarming signs of decay that the Government restored one of the towers and made a few other pressing repairs. In 1847 the staff of chaplains was raised to thirty, and they were ordered to live in the building, which they did, it was said, with considerable reluctance.

Seven years later, these ecclesiastics, or the survivors of them, were replaced, by a decree of Isabella II. (May 30, 1854), by a small society of Jeromite monks, presided over by a Prior. The revived monastic life of the house was solemnly inaugurated by the Cardinal Primate. We are told by the historian of the Escorial that a "distinguished company of courtiers, a vast concourse of people from the neighbouring towns, and the whole population of the royal seat, were present at the ceremony, and displayed that devotion which Spaniards always display at all religious rites."

The subsequent revolution has, we presume, once more put the Jeronites to flight; but it would, perhaps, be rash to assume that the monk has finally disappeared from the cloisters and halls of Philip II. The casualty which has again brought the name of the Escorial into temporary promi-

nence is a physical visitation similar to others which have so often imperilled its existence. About 10 P.M. on the night of October 1, of this year, a frightful storm of rain, thunder and lightning burst over the Castilles. Violent enough at Madrid, its fiercest fury was felt at the Escorial. A thunder-clap, louder than many other very loud ones, awoke the echoes of the Guadaramas and terrified the inhabitants of the village. Half-an-hour afterwards the storm abated, and the sky became clear. The great bell of the monastery was then heard ringing its fire-signal. Lightning had struck the roof of the College in the Court of Kings, and the flames were spreading in the direction of the library. About 700 people, men, women and children, started from their slumbers, and rushed to the rescue. The contents of the library were removed to a place of safety, but there was only one fire-engine at hand, and that in bad order. Aid was telegraphed for to Madrid at 11.30 P.M., but the engines with their apparatus did not arrive, from causes which have yet to be explained, until 6.30 A.M. on the 2nd October. King Amadeus was preparing to go down in the next special train, but desisted in consequence of a telegram from the officer in charge, saying that the fire was subdued. In spite of this assurance the flames continued to show themselves all day, and it was not till between 9 and 10 A.M. on the 3rd that the conflagration was finally quelled. None of the works of art were injured, unless in the removal. Fears were entertained for the frescoes on the ceiling of the library, not from the effects of fire but from the weight of rubbish which encumbered the floors above them; but the cautious and successful removal of this rubbish is said to be in progress. The damage done to the building has been variously and, of course, very roughly estimated at 25,000*l.*, 30,000*l.*, and 40,000*l.* A subscription to defray the repairs was talked of, but the king has announced his intention of meeting the whole expense from his own resources—an act of generosity far beyond anything his people has yet deserved at his hands.

Such is the last vicissitude of the Spaniards' eighth wonder of the world—once a symbol of vastness so familiar to the English imagination, as to be embodied in a rhyming adage preserved by George Herbert:—

My house, my house ! although but small,  
Thou art to me the Escorial ! \*

Those who desire to see it as it once was, should refer to the *Diferentes Vues del Escorial* par Louis Meunier, 1665, or the *Vistas del Escorial*, by Josef Gomez de Navia, 1800; both of which give a fair idea of many of its most imposing aspects.

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\* *Jacula Prudentum*. London, 1640. 8vo. No. 413.

## Deliberance.

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FAREWELL, O women of my dreams,  
 Who wearied me to follow you,  
 To track the course of twilight streams,  
 By fading scents, by fleeting gleams,  
 Between the dawn and dusk and dew,  
 Through endless, aimless wanderings ;  
 Henceforth I woo you not to stay  
 And make a darkness of the day,  
 Or light it with the vanishings  
 Of smiles I never thought were true,  
 And only sweet because so few :  
 My feet forsake the enchanted ground,  
 For I, who never sought, am found.

For love has sent his messenger  
 To take what you have left behind,  
 To seal my spirit up in her  
 Whose touch sets free the prisoner,  
 Whose look is sight unto the blind.  
 Her eyes are rather grey than blue,  
 She does not fear to laugh and cry,  
 While you could only smile and sigh ;  
 Yet she is subtler far than you,  
 Who were too melting to be kind,  
 Too shadowy to be refined ;  
 But she is earthy of the earth,  
 More manifold, of better worth.



O many shapes of one desire,  
O many voices of one thought,  
Who seemed too sweet to let me tire  
Of deadly service without hire,  
Whose presence, often vainly sought,  
Still seemed the life of life to me,  
Whose cruel sleight of tender skill  
Was as a net about my will,  
And where my inmost heart should be,  
Whose blandishments had well-nigh brought  
All other life in me to nought,  
And drowned it in love's stolen wine,  
Because ye had no life but mine.

O women of my dreams, farewell ;  
In vain ye loiter at the door,  
Having no other place to dwell,  
In middle earth, or heaven, or hell,  
For ye shall dwell with me no more.  
Love's sun is up, what would ye here ?  
The path is plain, the goal in sight,  
Why should my eyes turn back to night,  
Or why should dim desire be dear ?  
Be sure I longed to say before  
My famine fed upon the store  
Of Love, who conquers and redeems,—  
Farewell, O women of my dreams.

G. A. SIMCOX.

## The Scientific Gentleman.

### PART I.

#### CHAPTER I.

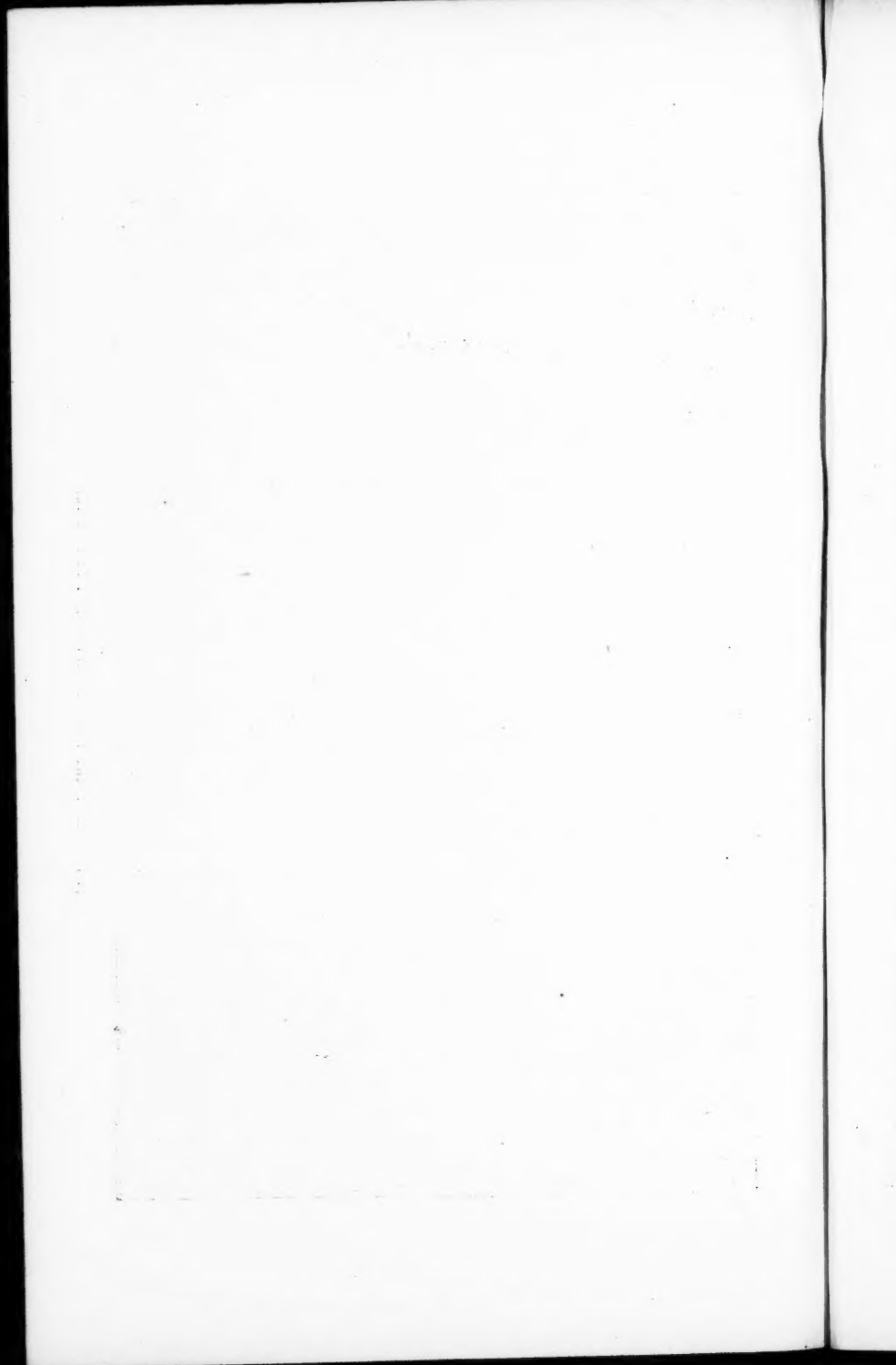


HERE were a great variety of houses on the Green ; some of them handsome and wealthy, some very old-fashioned, some even which might be called tumbledown. The two worst and smallest of these were at the lower end of the Green, not far from the "Barleymow." It must not be supposed, however, that they were unpleasantly affected by the neighbourhood of the "Barleymow." They were withdrawn from contact with it quite as much as we were, who lived at the other end ; and though they were small and out of repair, and might even look mouldy and damp to a careless passer-by, they were still houses for gentle-folk, where nobody need have been ashamed to live. They were built partly of wood and partly of white-

washed brick, and each stood in the midst of a very luxuriant garden. At the time Mr. Reinhardt, of whom I am going to speak, came to East Cottage, as it was called, the place had been very much neglected ; the trees and bushes grew wildly all over the garden, the flower-beds had gone to ruin, the kitchen-garden was a desert, with only a dreary cabbage or great long straggling onion-plant run to seed showing among the gooseberries and currants, which looked like the copsewood in a forest. It is miserable to see



"IT IS SO LOVELY," SHE SAID, "I CAN'T GIVE IT UP JUST YET."



a place go to destruction like this, and I could not but reflect often how many poor people there were without a roof to shelter them, while this house was going to ruin for want of an inhabitant. "My dear lady, that is communism, rank communism," the Admiral said to me when I ventured to express my sentiments aloud; but I confess I never could see it.

The house belonged to Mr. Falkland, who was a distant relation of Lord Goodwin's and lived chiefly in London. He was a young man, and a barrister, living, I suppose, in chambers, as most of them do; but I wondered he did not furnish the place and keep it in order, if it had been only for the pleasure of coming down with his friends from Saturday to Monday, to spend Sunday in the country. When I suggested this young Robert Lloyd, Mrs. Damerel's brother, took it upon him to laugh.

"There is nothing to do here," he said. "If it were near the river, for boating, it would be a different matter, or even if there was a stream to fish in; but a fellow has nothing to do here, and why should Falkland come to bore himself to death?" Thus the young man ended with a sigh for himself though he had begun with a laugh at me.

"If he is so afraid to be bored himself," said I—for I was rather angry to hear our pretty village so lightly spoken of—"I am sure he must know quantities of people who would not be bored. Young barristers marry sometimes, I suppose, imprudently, like other young people——"

"Curates, for instance," said Robert, who was a saucy boy.

"Curates, and young officers, and all sorts of foolish people," said I; "and think what a comfort that little house would be to a poor young couple with babies! Oh no, I do not like to see such a waste: a house going to rack and ruin for want of some one to live in it, and so many people famishing for want of fresh air, and the country. Don't say any more, for it hurts me to see it. I wish it were mine to do what I liked with it only for a year."

"Communism, rank communism," said the Admiral. But if that is communism, then I am a communist, and I don't deny it. I would not waste a Christian dwelling-place any more than I would throw away good honest wholesome bread.

However, this state of things came to an end one spring, a good many years ago. Workmen came and began to put East Cottage in order. We all took the greatest interest in the work. It was quite a place to go to for our afternoon walks, and sometimes as many as three and four parties would meet there among the shavings and the pails of plaster and whitewash. It was being very thoroughly done up. We consulted each other and gave our opinions about all the papers, as if it mattered whether we liked them or not. The Green thought well of the new tenant's taste on the whole, though some of us had doubts about the decoration of the drawing-room, which was rather a dark little room by nature. The paper for it was terribly artistic. It was one of those new designs which I always think are too ecclesiastical for a private house—groups of five or six daisies tied together with long stalks, detached and distinct, and all the hair on their

heads, standing on end, so to speak ; but we who objected had a conviction that it was only our ignorance, and merely whispered to each other in corners, that we were not quite sure—that perhaps it was just a little—but the people who knew better liked it very much.

It was some time before we found out who the new tenant was. He did not come down until after everything had been arranged and ready for some weeks. Then we found out that he was a Mr. Reinhardt, a gentleman who was well-known, people said, in scientific circles. He was of German extraction, we supposed, by his name, and as for his connections, or where he came from, nobody knew anything about them. An old housekeeper was the first person who made her appearance, and then came an old manservant ; both of them looked the very models of respectability, but I do not think, for my own part, that the sight of them gave me a very pleasant feeling about their master. They chilled you only to look at them. The woman had a suspicious watchful look, her eyes seemed to be always on the nearest corner looking for some one, and she had an air of resolution which I should not have liked to struggle against. The man was not quite so alarming, for he was older and rather feeble on his legs. One felt that there must be some weakness in his character to justify the little deviousness that would now and then appear in his steps. These two people attracted our notice in the interval of waiting for their master. The man's name was White—an innocent feeble sort of name, but highly respectable—and he called the woman something which sounded like Missis Sarah ; but whether it was her Christian name or her surname we never could make out.

It was on a Monday evening, and I had gone to dine at the Lodge with Sir Thomas and Lady Denzil, when the first certain news of the new tenant of East Cottage reached us. The gentlemen, of course, had been the first to hear it. Somehow, though it is taken for granted that women are the great traffickers in gossip, it is the men who always start the subject. When they came into the drawing-room after dinner they gave us the information, which they had already been discussing among themselves over their wine.

"Mr. Reinhardt has arrived," Sir Thomas said to Lady Denzil ; and we all asked, "When ?"

"He came yesterday, I believe," said Sir Thomas.

"Yesterday ! Why, yesterday was Sunday," cried some one ; and though we are, as a community, tolerably free from prejudice, we were all somewhat shocked ; and there was a pause.

"I believe Sunday is considered the most lucky day for everything abroad," said Lady Denzil, after that interval ; "for beginning a journey, and no doubt for entering a house. And as he is of German extraction——"

"He does not look like a German," said Robert Lloyd ; "he is quite an old fellow—about fifty, I should say—and dark, not fair."

At this speech the most of us laughed ; for an old fellow of fifty seemed absurd to us, who were that age, or more ; but Robert, at twenty, had no doubt on the subject.



"Well," he said, half offended, "I could not have said a young fellow, could I? He stoops, he is awfully thin, like an old magician, and shabbily dressed, and——"

"You must have examined him from head to foot, Robert."

"A fellow can't help seeing," said Robert, "when he looks; and I thought you all wanted to know."

Then we had a discussion as to what notice should be taken of the new-comer. We did not know whether he was married or not, and, consequently, could not go fully into the question; but the aspect of the house and the looks of the servants were much against it. For my own part, I felt convinced he was not married; and, so far as we ladies were concerned, the question was thus made sufficiently easy. But the gentlemen felt the weight proportionably heavy on their shoulders.

"I never knew any one of the name of Reinhardt," Sir Thomas said, with a musing air.

"Probably he will have brought letters from somebody," the Admiral suggested: and that was a wonderful comfort to all the men.

Of course he must have letters from somebody; he must know some one who knew Sir Thomas, or Mr. Damerel, or the Admiral, or General Perronet, or the Lloyds. Surely the world was not so large as to make it possible that the new-comer did not know some one who knew one of the people on the Green. As for being a scientific notability, or even a literary character, I am afraid that would not have done much for him in Dinglefield. If he had been cousin to poor Lord Glyndon, who was next to an idiot, it would have been of a great deal more service to him. I do not say that we were right: I think there are other things which ought to be taken into consideration; but, without arguing about it, there is no doubt that so it was.

The Green generally kept a watchful eye for some time on the East Cottage. There were no other servants except those two whom we had already seen. Sometimes the gardener, who kept all the little gardens about in order—"doing for" ladies like myself, for instance, who could not afford to keep a gardener—was called in to assist at East Cottage; and I believe (of course I could not question him on the subject; I heard this through one of the maids) that he was very joocular about the manservant, who was a real man-of-all-work, doing everything you could think of, from helping to cook, down to digging in the garden. Our gardener opened his mouth and uttered a great laugh when he spoke of him. He held the opinion common to a great many of his class, that to undertake too much was a positive injury to others. A servant who kept to his own work, and thought it was "not his place" to interfere with anything beyond it, or lend a helping hand in matters beyond his own immediate calling, was Matthew's model of what a servant ought to be, and a man who pretended to be a butler, and was a Jack-of-all-trades, was a contemptible object to our gardener: "taking the bread out o' other folkses' mouths," he said. He thought the man at the East Cottage was

a foreigner, and altogether had a very poor opinion of him. But, however, what was a great deal worse was the fact that neither the man-servant, nor the woman, nor the master, appeared to care for our notice, or in any way took the place they ought to have done in our little community. They had their things down from London; they either did their washing "within themselves" or sent it also away to a distance; they made no friends, and sought none. Mr. Reinhardt brought no letters of introduction. Sometimes—but rarely—he might be seen of an evening walking towards the Dell, with an umbrella over his head to shield him from the setting sun, but he never looked at anybody whom he met, or showed the least inclination to cultivate acquaintance, even with a child or a dog. And the worst of all was that he certainly never went to church. We were very regular church-goers on the Green. Some of us preferred sometimes to go to a little church in the woods, which was intended for the scattered population of our forest district, and was very pretty and sweet in the midst of the great trees, instead of to the parish. But to one or other everybody went once every Sunday at least. It was quite a pretty sight on Sunday morning to see everybody turning out—families all together, and lonely folk like myself, who scarcely could feel lonely when there was such a feeling of harmony and friendliness about. The young people set off walking generally a little while before us; but most of the elder people drove, for it was a good long way. And though some rigid persons thought it was wrong on the Sunday, yet the nice carriages and horses looked pleasant, and the servants always had time to come to church; and an old lady like Lady Denzil, for instance, must have stayed at home altogether if she had not been allowed to drive. I think a distinction should be made in such cases. But when all the houses thus opened their doors and poured forth their inhabitants, it may be supposed how strange it looked that one house should never open and no figure ever come from it to join the Sunday stream. Even the housekeeper, so far as we could ascertain, never had a Sunday out. They lived within those walls, within the trees that were now so tidy and trim. One morning when I had a cold, and was reading the service by myself in my own room, I had a glimpse of the master of the house. It was a summer day, very soft and blue, and full of sunshine. You know what I mean when I say blue—the sky seemed to stoop nearer to the earth, the earth hushed itself and looked up all still and gentle to the sky. There were no clouds above, and nobody moving below; nothing but a little thrill and flicker of leaves, a faint rustle of the grass, and the birds singing with a softer note, as if they too knew it was Sunday. My room is in the front of the house, and overlooks all the Green. The window was open, and the click of a latch sounding in the stillness made me lift my head without thinking from the lesson I was reading. It was Mr. Reinhardt, who had come out of his cottage. He came to the garden gate and stood for a moment looking out. I was not near enough to see his face, but in every line of his spare stooping figure there was suspicion and doubt. He looked to the

right and to the left with a curious prying eagerness, as if he expected to see some one coming. And then he came out altogether, and began to walk up and down, up and down. The stillness was so great that, though he walked very softly, the sound of his steps on the gravel of the road reached me from time to time. I stopped in my reading to watch him, in spite of myself. Every time he turned he looked about him in the same suspicious curious way. Was he waiting for some one? was he looking out for a visitor? or was he (the thought sprang into my mind all at once) insane, perhaps, and had escaped from his keepers in the cottage? This thought made my heart jump, but a little reflection calmed me, for he had not the least appearance of insanity. The little jar now and then of his foot when he turned kept me in excitement; I felt it impossible to keep from watching him. When I found how abstracted my mind was getting, I knelt down to say the Litany, feeling that it was wrong to yield to this; and when I got up from my knees the first carriage—the Denzils' carriage—was coming gleaming along the distant road in the sunshine, coming back from church, and the lonely figure was gone. I did not know whether he had gone in again or had extended his walk. But I felt somehow all that day, though you will say with very little reason, that I knew something more about our strange neighbour than most people did on the Green.

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## CHAPTER II.

THIS seclusion and isolation of East Cottage did not, however, last very long. Before the summer was over Sir Thomas, who, though he stood on his dignity sometimes, was very kind at bottom, began to feel compunctious about his solitary neighbour: now and then he would say something which betrayed this. "It worries me to think there is some one there who has been taken no notice of by anybody," he would say. "Of course it is his own fault—entirely his own fault." The next time one met him he would return to the subject. "What a lovely day! Everybody seems to be out-of-doors—except at East Cottage, where they have the blinds drawn down." This would be said with a pucker of vexation and annoyance about his mouth. He was angry with the stranger, and sorry, and did not know what to do. And I for one knew what would follow. But we were all very curious when we heard that Sir Thomas had actually called. The Stokes came running in to tell me one afternoon. "Oh, fancy, Mrs. Musgrave, Sir Thomas has called!" cried Lucy. "And he has been admitted, which is still greater fun," said Robert Lloyd, who was with them. I may say in passing that this was before Robert had passed his examination, when he was an idle young man at home, trying hard to persuade Lucy Stoke that he and she were in love with each other. Their parents, of course, would never have permitted such a thing for a moment, and fortunately there turned

out to be nothing in it ; but at present this was the chief occupation of Robert's life.

"I am very glad," said I. "I knew Sir Thomas never would be happy till he had done it."

"And oh, you don't know what funny stories there are about," said Lucy. "They say he killed his wife, and that he is always thinking he sees her ghost. I wonder if it is true? They say he can never be left alone or in the dark; he is so frightened. I met him yesterday, and it made me jump. I never saw a man who killed his wife before."

"But who says he killed his wife?"

"Oh, everybody: we heard it from Matthew the gardener, and I think he heard it at the 'Barleymow,' and it is all over the place. Fancy Sir Thomas calling on such a person; for I suppose," said Lucy, "though you are so very superior, you men, and may beat us, and all that, it is not made law yet that you may kill your wives."

"It might just as well be the law, for I am sure there are many other things quite as bad," said Lottie, while Robert, who had been appealed to, whispered some answer which made Lucy laugh. "Poor man, I wonder if she was a very bad woman, and if she haunts him. How disappointed he must have been to find he could not get rid of her even that way!"

"Lottie, my dear, here is Sir Thomas coming: don't talk so much nonsense," said I, hurriedly.

I am afraid, however, that Sir Thomas rather liked the nonsense. He had not the feeling of responsibility in encouraging girls to run on, that most women have. He thought it was amusing, as men generally do, and never paused to think how bad it was for the girls. But to-day he was too full of his own story to care much for theirs. He came in with dusty boots, which was quite against his principles, and stretched his long spare limbs out on the beautiful rug which the Stokes had worked for me in a way that went to my heart. That showed how very much pre-occupied he was; for Sir Thomas was never inconsiderate about such matters.

"Well," he said, pushing his thin white hair off his forehead, and stretching out his legs as if he were quite worn out. "There is one piece of work well over. I have had a good many tough jobs in my life, but I don't know that I ever had a worse."

"Oh, tell us what happened. Is he mad? did he try to keep the door shut? did he hurt you?" cried the Stokes.

Sir Thomas smiled upon this nonsense as if it had been perfectly reasonable, and the best sense in the world.

"Hurt me! well, not quite: he was not likely to try that. He is a little mite of a man, who could not hurt a fly. And besides," added Sir Thomas, correcting himself, "he is a gentleman. I have no reason to doubt he is a perfect gentleman. He conducts himself quite as—as all the rest of us do. No, it was the difficulty in getting in that bewildered me."

"Was there a difficulty in getting in?"

"You shall hear. The servant looked as if he would faint when he saw me. 'Mr. Reinhardt at home?' Oh! he could not quite say; if I would wait he would go and ask. So I waited in the hall," said Sir Thomas, with a smile. "Well, yes, it was odd, of course; but such an experience now and then is not bad for one. It shows you, you know, how little importance you are of, the moment you get beyond the circle of people who know you. I think really it is salutary, you know, if you come to that—and amusing," he added, this time with a little laugh.

"Oh, but what a shame: how shocking, how horrid! You, Sir Thomas, whom everybody knows!" said Lottie Stoke.

"That is just what makes it so instructive," he said. "I must have stood in the hall a quarter-of-an-hour; allowing for the tediousness of waiting, I should say certainly a quarter-of-an-hour; and then the man came back and asked me, what do you think? if I had come of my own accord, or if some one had sent me. It was ludicrous," said Sir Thomas, with a half laugh; "but if you will think of it, it was rather irritating. I am afraid I lost my temper a little. I said, 'I am Sir Thomas Denzil. I live at the Lodge, and I have come to call upon your master,' in a tone which made the old fool of a man shake, and then some one else appeared at the top of the stairs. It was Mr. Reinhardt, who had heard my voice."

"What did he say for himself?" I asked.

"It was not his fault," said Sir Thomas; "he knew nothing of it. He is a very well-informed man, Mrs. Musgrave. He is quite able to enter into conversation on any subject. He was very glad to see me. He is a sort of recluse, it is easy to perceive, but quite a proper man; very well-informed, one whom it was a pleasure to converse with, I assure you. He made a thousand apologies. He said something about unfortunate circumstances, and a disagreeable visitor, as an excuse for his man; but whether the disagreeable visitor was some one who had been there or who was expected——"

"Oh, I know," cried Lucy Stokes, with excitement. "It was his wife's ghost."

Sir Thomas stopped short aghast, and looked at me to ask if the child had gone mad.

"How could they think Sir Thomas was the wife's ghost?" cried Lottie, "you silly girl! and besides, most likely it is not true."

"What is not true?" asked Sir Thomas, in dismay.

"Oh, they say he killed her," said Lucy, "and that she haunts him. They say his man sleeps in his room, and the housekeeper just outside. He cannot be left by himself for a moment, and I do not wonder he should be frightened if he has killed his wife."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Sir Thomas, raising his voice. "Nonsense!" he was quite angry. He had taken up the man, and felt responsible for him. "My dear child, I think you are going out of your little wits," he cried. "Killed his wife; why, the man is a thorough

gentleman. A most well-informed man, and knows my friend Sir Septimus Dash, who is the head of the British Association. Why, why, Lucy! you take away my breath."

"It was not me who said it," cried saucy Lucy. "It is all over the Green, everybody knows. They say she disappeared all at once, and never was heard of more; and then there used to be sounds like somebody crying and moaning; and then he got so frightened, he never would go anywhere, nor look any one in the face. Oh! only suppose; how strange it would be to have a haunted house on the Green. If I had anybody to go with me I should like to walk down to East Cottage at midnight."

"Let me go with you," whispered Robert; but fortunately I heard him, and gave Lucy a look. She was a silly little girl certainly, but not so bad as that.

"This is really very great nonsense," said Sir Thomas. "A haunted house at this time of day! Mrs. Musgrave, I hope you will use all your influence to put down this story if it exists. I give you my word, Mr. Reinhardt is quite an addition; and knows Sir Septimus Dash. A really well-bred, well-informed man. I am quite shocked, I assure you. Lucy, I hope you will not spread this ridiculous story. I shall ask your mother what she thinks. Poor man! no wonder he looked uncomfortable, if there is already a rumour like this."

"Then he did look uncomfortable?" said Lottie.

"No; I can't say he did. No; I don't mean uncomfortable," said Sir Thomas, seeing he had committed himself. "I mean—it is absurd altogether. A charming man; one whom you will all like immensely. I think Lady Denzil must have returned from her drive. We are to see you all to-morrow, I believe, in the afternoon? Now, Lucy, no more gossip; leave that to the old women, my dear."

"Sir Thomas does not know what to make of it," said Lottie, as we watched him cross the Green. "He has gone to my lady to have his mind made up whether he ought to pay any attention to it or not."

"And my lady will say not," said I; "fortunately we are all sure of that. Lady Denzil will not let anybody be condemned without a hearing. And, Lucy, I think Sir Thomas gave you very good advice; when you are old it will be time enough to amuse yourself with spreading stories, especially such dreadful stories as this."

Lucy took offence at this, and went away pouting—comforted by Robert Lloyd, and very indignant with me. Lottie stayed for a moment behind her to tell me that it was really quite true, and that the report had gone all over the Green, and everybody was talking of it. Nobody knew quite where it had come from, but it was already known to all the world at Dinglefield, and a very unpleasant report it was.

However, time went on, and no more was heard of this. In a little place like Dinglefield, as soon as everybody has heard a story, a pause ensues. We cannot go on indefinitely propagating it, and renewing our own faith in it. When we all know it, and nothing more can be said on



the subject, we are pulled up short; and unless there are new facts to comment upon, or some new light thrown upon the affair, it is almost sure to die away, as a matter of course. This was the case in respect to the report about Mr. Reinhardt. We got no more information, and we could not go on talking about the old story for ever. We exhausted it, and grew tired of it, and let it drop; and thus, by degrees, we got used to him, and became acquainted with him, more or less.

The other gentlemen called, one by one, after Sir Thomas. He was asked, timidly, to one or two dinner-parties, and declined, which we thought at first showed, on the whole, good taste on his part. But he became quite friendly when we met him on the road, and would stop to talk, and showed no moroseness, nor fear of any one. He had what was generally pronounced to be a refined face—the features high and clear, with a kind of ivory paleness, and keen eyes, which were very sharp to note everything. He was, as Sir Thomas said, very well-informed. There seemed to be nothing that you could talk about that he did not know; and in science, the gentlemen said he was a perfect mine of knowledge. I am not sure, however, that they were very good judges, for I don't think either Sir Thomas or the Admiral knew much about science. One thing, however, which made some of us still doubtful about him was the fact that he never talked of *people*. When a name was mentioned in conversation he never said, "Oh, I know him very well—I knew his father—a cousin of his was a great friend of mine," as most people do. All the expression went out of his face as soon as we came to this kind of talk; and it may be supposed how very much at a loss most people were in consequence for subjects to talk about. But this, though it was strange, was not any sort of proof that he had done anything very wicked. It might be—and the most of us thought it was—an evidence that he had not lived in society. "He knows my friend, Sir Septimus Dash," Sir Thomas always said in his favour; but then, of course, Sir Septimus was a public personage, and Mr. Reinhardt might have made his acquaintance at some public place. But still, a man may be of no family, and out of society, and yet not have murdered his wife. After a while we began to think, indeed, that whether he had killed her or not, it was just as well there was no wife in the question—"Just as well," Mrs. Perronet said, who was great in matters of society. "A man whom nobody knows does not matter; but what should we have done with a woman?"

"He must have killed her on purpose to save us the trouble," said Lottie. But the General's wife was quite in earnest, and did not see the joke.

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### CHAPTER III.

It is a good thing, on the whole, to have a house with a mystery about it in one's immediate neighbourhood. Gradually we ceased to believe that Mr. Reinhardt had anything criminal about him. But it was quite certain that there was a mystery—that we knew nothing about him, neither

where he came from, nor what his family was. For one thing, he had certainly no occupation: therefore, of course, he must be sufficiently well off to do without that: and he had no relations—no one who ever came to see him, nor of whom he talked; and though the men who called upon him had been admitted, they were never asked to go back, nor had one of us ladies ever crossed his threshold. It would seem, indeed, that he had made a rule against admitting ladies, for when Mrs. Damerel herself called to speak of the soup-kitchen, old White came and spoke to her at the gate, and trembled very much, and begged her a hundred pardons, but, nevertheless, would not let her in—a thing which made her very indignant. Thus the house became to us all a mysterious house, and, on the whole, I think we rather liked it. The mystery did no harm, and it certainly amused us, and kept our interest alive.

Thus the summer passed, and Dinglefield had got used to the Scientific Gentleman. That was the name he generally went by. When strangers came to the Green, and had it all described to them—Sir Thomas here, the Admiral there, the General at the other side, and so on, we always gave a little special description of Mr. Reinhardt. "He is a Fellow of the Royal Society," one would say, not knowing much what that meant. "He belongs to the British Association," said another. "He is a great scientific light." We began even to feel a little proud of him. Even I myself, on the nights when I did not sleep well, used to feel quite pleased, when I looked out, to see the Scientific Gentleman's light still burning. He was sitting up there, no doubt, pondering things that were much beyond our comprehension—and it made us proud to think that, on the Green, there was some one who was going over the abstrusest questions in the dead of the night.

It was about six months after his arrival when, one evening, for some special reason, I forget what, I went to Mrs. Stoke's to tea. She lives a little way down the lane, on the other side of the "Barleymow." It is not often that she asks any one even to tea. As a rule, people generally ask her and her daughters, for we are all very well aware of her circumstances; but, on this particular night, I was there for some reason or other. It was October, and the nights had begun to be cold; but there was a full moon, and at ten o'clock it was as light as day. This was why I would not let them send any one home with me. I must say I have never understood how middle-aged women like myself can have a pretty young maid-servant sent for them, knowing very well that the girl must walk one way alone, and that, if there is any danger at all, a young woman of twenty is more in the way of it, than one who might be her mother. I remember going to the door to look out, and protesting that I was not the least nervous—nor was I. I knew all the roads as well as I knew my own garden, and everybody round about knew me. The way was not at all lonely. To be sure, there were not many people walking about; but then there were houses all along—and lastly, it was light as day. The moon was shining in that lavish sort of way which she only has when she is at the full.

The houses amid their trees stood whitened over, held fast by the light, as it were, as the wedding-guest was held by the eye of the Ancient Mariner. The shadows were as black as the light was white. There was a certain solemnity about it, so full of light, and yet so colourless. After I had left the house, and had come out—I and my shadow—into the full whiteness, it made an impression upon me which I could scarcely resist. My first idea when I glanced back was that my own shadow was some one stealing after me. That gave me a shake for a moment, though I laughed at myself. The lights of the “Barleymow” neutralized this solemn feeling, and I went on, thinking to myself what a good story it would be for my neighbours—my own shadow! I did not cross the Green, as I generally did, partly from a vague feeling that, though it was so light and so safe, there was a certain company in being close to the houses—not that I was the least afraid, or that, indeed, there was any occasion to fear, but just for company's sake. By this time, I think it must have been very nearly eleven o'clock, which is a late hour for Dinglefield. All the houses seemed shut up for the night. Looking up the Green, the effect of the sleeping place, with the moon shining on the pale gables and ends of houses, and all the trees in black, and the white stretch of space in the centre, looking as if it had been clean swept by the moonlight of every obstacle, had the strangest effect. I was not in the least afraid. What should I be afraid of, so close to my own door? But still I felt a little shiver run over me—a something involuntary, which I could not help, like that little thrill of the nerves, which makes people say that some one is walking over your grave.

And all at once in the great stillness and quiet I heard a sound quite near. It was very soft at first, not much louder than a sigh. I hurried on for a few steps frightened, I could not tell why, and then, disgusted with myself, I stopped to listen. Yes, now it came again, louder this time; and then I turned round to look where it came from. It was the sound of some one moaning either in sorrow or in pain: a soft interrupted moan, now and then stopping short with a kind of sob. My heart began to beat, but I said to myself, it is some one in trouble, and I can't run away. The sound came from the side of East Cottage, just where the little railing in front ended; and, after a long look, I began to see that there was some one there. What I made out was the outline of a figure seated on the ground, with knees drawn up, and looking so thin that they almost came to a point. It was straight up against the railing, and so overshadowed by the lilac-bushes that the outline of the knees, black, but whitened over as it were with a sprinkling of snow or silver, was all that could be made out. It was like something dimly seen in a picture, not like flesh and blood. It gave me the strangest sensation to see this something, this shrouded semblance of a human figure at Mr. Reinhardt's door. All the stories that had been told of him came back to my mind. His wife! I would have kept the recollection out of my mind if I could, but it came without any will of mine. I turned and went on as fast as ever I

could. I should have run like a frightened child had I followed my own instinctive feeling. My heart beat, my feet rang upon the gravel; and then I stopped short, hating myself. How silly and weak I was! It might be some poor creature, some tramp or wandering wretch, who had sunk down there in sickness or weariness, while I in my cowardice passed by on the other side frightened lest it should be a ghost. I do not know to this day how it was that I forced myself to turn and go back, but I did. Oh! what a moaning, wailing sound it was; not loud, but the very cry of desolation. I felt as I went, though my heart beat so, that such a moaning could only come from a living creature, one who had a body full of weariness and pain, as well as a suffering soul.

I went back and went up to the thing with those sharp-pointed knees; then I saw the hands clasped round the knees, and the hopeless head bowed down upon them, all black and silvered over like something cut out of ebony. I even saw, or thought I saw, amid the flickering of the heavens above and the shadows below, a faint rocking in the miserable figure;—that mechanical unconscious rocking which is one of the primitive ways of showing pain. I went up, all trembling as I was, and asked "What is the matter?" with a voice as tremulous. There was no answer; only the moaning went on, and the movement became more perceptible. Fortunately, my terror died away when I saw this. The human sound and action, that were like what everybody does, brought me back at once out of all supernatural dread. It was a woman, and she was unhappy. I dismissed the other thought—or, rather, it left me unawares.

This gave me a great deal of courage. I repeated my question; and then, as there was no answer, went up and touched her softly. The figure rose with a spring in a moment, before I could think what she was going to do. She put out one of her hands, and pushed me off.

"Ah! have I brought you out at last?" she cried wildly; and then stopped short and stared at me; while I stared, too, feeling, whoever it might be she had expected, that I was not the person. Her movement was so sudden, that I shrank back in terror, fearing once more I could not tell what. She was a very tall, slight woman, with a shawl tightly wrapped about her. In the confusion of the moment I could remark nothing more.

"Are you ill?" I said, faltering. "My good woman, I—I don't want to harm you; I heard you moaning, and I—thought you were ill——"

She seized me by the arm, making my very teeth chatter. The grasp was bony and hard like the hand of a skeleton.

"Are you from that house? are you from him?" she cried, pointing behind her with her other hand. "Bid him come out to me himself; bid him come out and go down on his knees before I'll give in to enter his door. Oh! I've not come here for nought—I've not come here for nought! I've come with all my wrongs that he's done me. Tell him to come out himself; it is his part."

Her voice grew hoarse with the passion that was in it, and yet it was a voice that had been sweet.

I put up my hand, pleading with her, trying to get a hearing, but she held me fast by the arm.

"I have not come from that house," I said. "You frighten me. I—I live close by. I was passing, and heard a moan. Is there anything the matter? Can I be—of any use?"

I said this very doubtfully, for I was afraid of the strange figure, and the passionate speech.

Then she let go her hold all at once. She looked at me, and then all round. There was not another creature visible except, behind me, I suppose, the open door and lights of the "Barleymow." She might have done almost what she would to me had she been disposed;—at least, at the moment that was how I felt.

"You live close by?" she said, putting her hand upon her heart, which was panting and heaving with her passion.

"Yes. Are you—staying in the neighbourhood? Have you—lost your way?"

I said this in my bewilderment, not knowing what the words were which came from my lips. Then the poor creature leaned back upon the wall, and gasped and sobbed. I could not make out at first whether it was emotion or want of breath.

"Yes, I've lost my way," she said; "not here, but in life; I've lost my way in life, and I'll never find it again. Oh! I'm ill,—I'm very ill. If you are a good Christian, as you seem, take me in somewhere, and let me lie down till the spasm's past; I feel it coming on now."

"What is it?" I asked.

She put her hand upon her heart, and panted and gasped for breath. Poor wretch! At that moment I heard behind me the locking of the door at the "Barleymow." I know I ought to have called out to them to wait, but I had not my wits about me as one ought to have.

"Have you no home?" I asked; "nowhere to go to? You must live somewhere. I will go with you, and take you home."

"Home!" she cried. "It is here or in the churchyard, nowhere else,—here or in the churchyard. Take me to one or the other, good woman, for Christ's sake, I don't care which—to my husband's house or to the churchyard—for Christ's sake."

For Christ's sake! You may blame me, but what could I do? Could any of you refuse if you were asked in that name? You may say any one can use such words,—any vagabond, any wretch—and, of course, it is true; but could you resist the plea,—you who are neither a wretch nor a vagabond?—I know you could not, any more than me.

"Lean upon me," I said; "take my arm; try if you can walk. Oh! I don't know who you are or what you are, but when you ask for Christ's sake, you know, he sees into your heart. If you have any place that I can take you to, tell me; you must know it is difficult to take a stranger into one's house like this. Tell me if you have not some room—some place where you can be taken care of; I will give you what you want all the same."

We were going on all this time, walking slowly towards my house ; she was gasping, holding one hand to her heart, and with the other leaning heavily on me. When I made this appeal to her she stopped and turned half round, waving her hand towards the house we were leaving behind us.

"If that is Mr. Reinhardt's house," she said, "take me there, if you will. I am—his wife. He'll leave me to die—on the doorstep—most likely ; and be glad. I haven't strength—to—say any more."

"His wife !" I cried, in my dismay.

"Lord, have mercy upon us !" cried the panting creature. "Ay ; that's the truth."

What could I do ? She was scarcely able to totter along, panting and breathless. It was her heart. Poor soul ! how could any one tell what she might have had to suffer. I took her, though, with trembling—what could I do else ?—to my own house.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

I CANNOT attempt to describe what my feelings were when I went into my own house with that strange woman. Though it was a very short way, we took a long time to get there. She had disease of the heart evidently, and one of the paroxysms had come on.

"I shall be better by-and-by," she said to me, gasping as she leaned on my arm.

My mind was in such a confusion that I did not know what I was doing. She might be only a tramp, a thief, a vagabond. As for what she had said of being Mr. Reinhardt's wife—— My head swam, I could neither understand nor explain to myself how I had got into such a position. But, whether she was good or bad, I could not help myself ; I was committed to it. Every house on the Green was closed and silent. The shutters were all put up at the "Barleymow," and silence reigned. No, thank heaven ! in the Admiral's window there was still lights : so that if anything happened I could call him to my aid. He was my nearest neighbour, and the sight of his lights gave me confidence.

My maid gave a little shriek when she opened the door, and this, too, roused me. I said, "Mary, this—lady is ill ; she will lie down on the sofa in the drawing-room while we get ready the west room. You will not mind the trouble, I am sure, when you see how ill she is."

This I said to smoothe matters, for it is not to be supposed that Mary, who was already yawning at my late return, should be quite pleased at being sent off to make up a bed and prepare a room unexpectedly, as it were, in the middle of the night. And I was glad, also, to send her away, for I saw her give a wondering look at the poor creature's clothes, which were dusty and soiled. She had been sitting on the dusty earth by Mr. Reinhardt's cottage, and it was not wonderful if her clothes showed



marks of it. I made her lie down on the sofa, and got her some wine. Poor forlorn creature! The rest seemed to be life, however, to her. She sank back upon the soft cushions, and her heavy breathing softened almost immediately. I left her there (though, I confess, not without a slight sensation of fear), and went to the west room to help Mary. It was a room we seldom used, at the end of a long passage, and, therefore, the one best fitted to put a stranger, about whom I knew nothing, in. Mary did not say anything, but I could feel that she disapproved of me in every pat she gave to the fresh sheets and pillows. And I was conciliatory, as one so often is to one's servants. I drew a little picture of how I had found the "poor lady" panting for breath and unable to walk—of how weak and how thin she was—and what a terrible thing to have heart-disease, which came on with any exertion—and how anxious her friends must be.

All this Mary listened to in grim silence, patting now and then the bedclothes with her hand, as if making a protest against all I said. At length, when I had exhausted my eloquence, and began to grow a little angry, Mary cleared her throat and replied.

"Please, ma'am, I know it ain't my place to speak——"

"Oh! you can say what you please, Mary, so long as it is not unkind to your neighbours," said I.

"I never set eyes on the—lady—before, so she can't be a neighbour of mine," said Mary; "but she's been seen about the Green days and days. I've seen her myself a haunting East Cottage, where that poor gentleman lives."

"You said this moment that you never set eyes on her before."

"Not to know her, ma'am," said Mary; "it's different. I saw her to-day walking up and down like a ghost, and I wouldn't have given six-pence for all she had on her. It ain't my place to speak, but one as you don't know, and as may have a gang ready to murder us all in our beds—— Mother was in service in London when she was young, and oh! to hear the tales she knows. Pretending to be ill is the commonest trick of all, mother says, and then they get took in, and then, when all's still——"

"It is very kind of you, I am sure, to instruct me by your mother's experiences," said I, feeling very angry. "Now you can go to bed if you please, and lock your door, and then you will be safe. I shall not want you any more to-night."

"Oh! but please, ma'am, I don't want to leave you by yourself—please, I don't!" cried Mary, with the ready tears coming to her eyes.

However, I sent her away. I was angry, and perhaps unreasonable, as people generally are when they are angry; though, when Mary went to bed, I confess it was not altogether with an easy mind that I found myself alone with the stranger in the silent house. It is always a comfort to know that there is some one within reach. I went back softly to the drawing-room. She was still lying on the sofa, quite motionless and quiet, no longer panting as she had done. When I looked at her closely I saw that she had

dropped asleep. The light of the lamp was full on her face, and yet she had dropped asleep, being, as I suppose, completely worn out. I saw her face then for the first time, and it startled me. It was not a face which you could describe by any of the lighter words of admiration as pretty or handsome. It was simply the most beautiful face I ever saw in my life. It was pale and worn, and looked almost like death lying back in that attitude of utter weakness on the velvet cushions; and, though the eyes were closed, and the effect of them lost, it was impossible to believe that the loveliest eyes in the world could have made her more beautiful. She had dark hair, wavy and slightly curling upon the forehead; her eyelashes were very long and dark, and curled upwards; her features, I think, must have been perfect; and the look of pain had gone from her face; she was as serene as if she had been dead.

I was very much startled by this: so much so that for the moment I sank down upon a chair, overcome by confusion and surprise, and did not even shade the lamp, as I had intended to do. You may wonder that I should be so much surprised, but then you must remember that great beauty is not common anywhere, and that to pick it out of the ditch, as it were, and find it thus in the person of one who might be a mere vagabond and vagrant for aught you could tell, was very strange and startling. It took away my breath; and then, the figure which belonged to this face formed so strange a contrast with it. I know, as everybody else does, that beauty is but skin-deep; that it is no sign of excellence, or of mental, or moral superiority in any way; that it is accidental and independent of the character of its possessor as good family is, or anything else you are born to: I know all this perfectly well; and yet I feel, as I suppose everybody else does, that great beauty is out of place in squalid surroundings. When I saw the worn and dusty dress, the shawl tightly drawn across her breast, the worn shoes that peeped out from below her skirt, I felt ashamed. It was absurd, but such was my feeling; I felt ashamed of my good gown and lace, and fresh ribbons. To think that I, and hundreds like me, should deck ourselves, and leave this creature in her dusty gown! My suspicions went out of my mind in a moment. Instead of the uneasy doubt whether, perhaps, she might have accomplices (it made me blush to think I had dreamt of such a thing) waiting outside, I began to feel indignant with everybody that she could be in such a plight. Reinhardt's wife! How did he dare, that mean, insignificant man, to marry such a creature, and to be cruel to her after he had married her! I started up and removed the lamp, shading her face, and I took my shawl, which was my best shawl, an Indian one, and really handsome, and covered her with it. I did it—I can't tell why—with a feeling that I was making her a little compensation. Then I opened one of the windows to let in the air, for the night was sultry; and then I put myself into my favourite chair, and leant back my head, and made myself as comfortable as I could to watch her till she woke. I should have thought this a great hardship a little while before, but I did not think it a hardship now. I had become her

partisan, her protector, her servant, in a moment, and all for no reason except the form of her features, the look of that sleeping face. I acknowledge that it was absurd, but still I know you would have done the same had you been in my place. I suspected her no more, had no doubts in my mind, and was not the least annoyed that Mary had gone to bed. It seemed to me as if her beauty established an immediate relationship between us, somehow, and made it natural that I, or any one else who might happen to be in the way, should give up our own convenience for her. It was her beauty that did it, nothing else, not her great want and solitude, not even the name by which she had adjured me;—her beauty, nothing more. I do not defend myself for having fallen prostrate before this primitive power; I could not help it, but I don't attempt to excuse myself.

I must have dozed in my chair, for I woke suddenly, dreaming that some one was standing over me, and staring at me—a kind of nightmare. I started with a little cry, and for the first moment I was bewildered, and could not think how I had got there. Then, all at once, I saw her, and the mystery was solved. She had woke, too, and lay on her side on the sofa, looking intently at me with a gaze which renewed my first impression of terror. She had not moved, she lay in the same attitude of exhaustion and grateful repose, with her head thrown back upon the cushions. There was only this difference—that whereas she had then been unconscious in sleep, she was now awake, and so vividly, intensely conscious that her look seemed an active influence. I felt that she was doing something to me by gazing at me so. She had woke me, no doubt, by that look. She made me restless now, so that I could not keep still. I rose up, and made a step or two towards her.

"Are you better? I hope you are better?" I said.

Still she did not move, but said calmly, without any attempt at explanation: "Are you watching me from kindness or because you were afraid I should do some harm?"

She was not grateful, the sight of me woke no kindly feeling in her, and I was wounded in spite of myself.

"Neither," said I; "you fell asleep, and I preferred staying here to waking you; but it is almost morning and the oil is nearly burnt out in the lamp. There is a room ready for you; will you come with me now?"

"I am very comfortable," she said; "I have not been so comfortable for a very long time. I have not been well off. I have had to lie on hard beds and eat poor fare, whilst all the time those who had a right to take care of me——"

"Don't think of that now," I said. "You will feel better if you are undressed. Come now and go to bed."

She kept her position, without taking any notice of what I said.

"I have a long story to tell you, a long story," she went on. "When you hear it you will change your mind about some things. Oh, how pleasant it is to be in a nice handsome *lady's* room again! How pleasant a carpet is, and pictures on the walls! I have not been used to them for

a long time. I suppose he has every kind of thing, everything that is pleasant; and, if he could, he would have liked to see me die at his door. That is what he wants. It would be a pleasure to him to look out some morning and see me lying like a piece of rubbish under the wall. He would have me thrown upon the dust-heap, I believe, or taken off by the scavengers as rubbish. Yes, that is what he would like, if he could."

"Oh, don't think so," I cried. "He cannot be so cruel. He has not a cruel face."

Upon this she sat up, with the passion rising in her eyes.

"How can you tell? you were never married to him," she said. "He never cast you off, never abandoned you, never——" Her excitement grew so great that she now rose up on her feet, and clenched her hand, and shook it as if at some one in the distance. "Oh, no," she cried, "no one knows him but me."

"Oh! if you would go to bed!" I said. "Indeed I must insist: you will tell me your story in the morning. Come, you must not talk any more to-night."

I did not get her disposed of so easily as this, but after a while she did allow herself to be persuaded. My mind had changed about her again, but I was too tired now to be frightened. I put her into the west room. And oh, how glad I was to lie down in my bed, though I had a stranger in the house whom I knew nothing of, and though it only wanted about an hour of day!

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#### CHAPTER V.

WHEN I got up, about two hours after, I was in a very uncomfortable state of mind, not knowing in the least what I ought to do. Daylight is a great matter, to be sure, and consoles one in one's perplexity; but yet daylight means the visits of one's friends, and inquiries into all that one has done and means to do. I could not have such an inmate in my house without people knowing it. I was thrusting myself, as it were, into a family quarrel which I knew nothing of—I one of the most peaceable people—!

When I went downstairs the drawing-room was still as I had left it, and the sofa and its cushions were all marked with dust where my poor visitor had lain down. I believe, though Mary is a good girl on the whole, that there was a little spite in all this, to show me my own enormity. A decanter of wine was left on the table, too, with the glass which had been used last night. It gave the most miserable squalid look to the room, or at least I thought so. Then Mary appeared with her broom and dust-pan, severely disapproving, and I was swept away, like the dust, and took refuge in the garden, which was hazy and dewy and rather cold on this October morning. The trees were all changing colour, the mignonette stalks were long and straggling, there was nothing in the beds but astres and dahlias and some other autumn flowers. And the monthly rose on the porch looked pale, as if it felt the coming frost. I went to the gate and looked out upon the Green with a pang of discomfort. What would everybody

think? There were not many people about except the tradespeople going for orders and the servants at their work. East Cottage looked more human than usual in the hazy autumn morning sun. The windows were all open, and White was sweeping the fallen leaves carefully away from the door. I even saw Mr. Reinhardt in his dressing-gown come out to speak to him. My heart beat wildly and I drew back at the sight. As if Mr. Reinhardt was anything to me! But I was restless and uncomfortable and could not compose myself. When I went in I could not sit down and breakfast by myself as I usually did. I wanted to see how my lodger was, and yet I did not want to disturb her. At last I went to the door of the west room and listened. When I heard signs of movement inside I knocked and went in. She was still in bed; she was lying half smothered up in the fine linen and downy pillows. On the bed there was an eider-down coverlet covered with crimson silk, and she had stretched out her arm over it and was grasping it with her hand. She greeted me with a smile which lighted up her beautiful face like sunshine.

"Oh, yes, I am better—I am quite well," she said. "I am so happy to be here."

She did not put out her hand, or offer any thanks or salutations, and it seemed to me that this was good taste. I was pleased with her for not being too grateful or affectionate. I believe if she had been very grateful and affectionate I should have thought that was best. For again the charm came over me—a charm doubled by her smile. How beautiful she was! the warm nest she was lying in, and the pleasure and comfort she evidently felt in being there, had brought a little colour to her cheeks—just a very little—but that became her beauty best. She was younger than I thought. I had supposed her to be over thirty last night, now she looked five or six-and-twenty, in the very height and fulness of her bloom.

"Shall I send you some breakfast?" I said.

"Oh, please! I suppose you don't know how nice it is to lie in a soft bed like this, to feel the nice linen and the silk, and to be waited upon? You have always been just so, and never known the difference? Ah! what a difference it is."

"I have been very poor in my time," said I.

"Have you? I should not have thought it. But never so poor as me. Let me have my breakfast, please: tea with cream in it. May I have some cream? and—anything—whatever you please; for I am hungry; but tea with cream."

"Surely," I said; "it is being prepared for you now."

And then I stood looking at her, wondering. I knew nothing of her, not even her name, and yet I stood in the most familiar relation to her, like a mother to a child. Her smile quite warmed and brightened me, as she lay there in such childish enjoyment. How strange it was. And it seemed to me that everything had gone out of her mind except the delightful novelty of her surrounding. She forgot that she was a stranger in a strange house, and all the suspicious unpleasant circumstances. When

Mary came in with the tray she positively laughed with pleasure, and jumped up in bed, raising herself as lightly as a child.

"You must have a shawl to put round your shoulders," I said.

"Oh, let me have the beautiful one you put over me last night. What a beauty it was! Let me have that," she cried.

Mary gave me a warning look. But I was indignant with Mary. I went and fetched it almost with tears in my eyes. Poor soul! poor child! like a baby admiring it because it was pretty. I put it round her, though it was my best: and with my cashmere about her shoulders, and her beautiful face all lighted up with pleasure, she was like a picture. I am sure the Sleeping Beauty could not have been more lovely when she started from her hundred years' sleep.

I went back to the dining-room and took my own breakfast quite exhilarated. My perplexities floated away. I too felt like a child with a new toy. If I had but had a daughter like that, I said to myself—what a sweet companion, what a delight in one's life! But then daughters will marry; and to think of such a one, bound to a cruel husband, who quarrelled with her, deserted her—Oh, what cruel stuff men are made of! What pretext could he have for conduct so monstrous? She was as sweet as a flower, and more beautiful than any woman I ever saw; and to leave her sitting in the dust at his closed door! I could scarcely keep still; my indignation was so great. The bloodless wretch! without ruth, or heart, or even common charity. One has heard such tales of men rapt up in some cold intellectual pursuit; how they get to forget everything, and despise love and duty, and all that is worth living for, for their miserable science. They would rather be fellows of a learned society than heads of happy houses; rather make some foolish discovery to be written down in the papers, than live a good life and look after their own. I have even known cases—certainly nothing so bad as this—but cases in which a man for his art, or his learning, or something, has driven his wife into miserable solitude, or still more miserable society. Yes, I have known such cases: and the curious thing is, that it is always the weak men, whose researches can be of use to no mortal being, who neglect everything for science. The great men are great enough to be men and philosophers too. All this I said in my heart with a contempt for our scientific gentleman which I did not disguise to myself. I finished my breakfast quickly, longing to go back to my guest, when all at once Martha and Nelly, the Admiral's daughters, came running in, as they had a way of doing. They were great favourites of mine, or, at least, Nelly was—but I was annoyed more than I could tell to see them now.

"We came in to ask if you were quite well," said Nelly. "Papa frightened us all with the strangest story. He insists that you came home quite late, leaning on Mary's arm, and was sure you must have been ill. You can't think how positive he is, and what a story he made out. He saw you from his window coming along the road, so he says; and now I look at you, Mrs. Musgrave, you are a little pale."



"It was not I, you can tell the Admiral," I said. "I wonder his sharp eyes were deceived. It was a—friend—I have staying with me."

"A friend you have staying with you? Fancy, Nelly! and we not to know."

"She came quite late—yesterday," said I. "She is in—very poor health. She has come to be—quiet. Poor thing, I had to give her my arm."

"But I thought you were at the Stokes' last night?" said Martha.

"So I was; but when I came back it was such a lovely night: you should have been out, Nelly, you who are so fond of moonlight. I never saw the Green look more beautiful. I could hardly make up my mind to come in."

Dear, dear, dear! I wonder if all our fibs are really kept an account of? As I went on romancing I felt a little shiver run over me. But what could I do?

Nelly gave me a look. She was wiser than her sister, who took everything in a matter-of-fact way. She gave me a kiss, and said, "We had better go and satisfy papa. He was quite anxious."

Nelly knew me best, and she did not believe me. But what story could I make up to Lady Denzil, for instance, whose eyes went through and through me, and saw everything I thought.

Then I went back to my charge. She had finished her breakfast, but she would not part with the shawl. She was sitting up in bed, stroking and patting it with her hand.

"It is so lovely," she said, "I can't give it up just yet. I like myself so much better when I have it on. Oh! I should be so much more proud of myself than I am, if I lived like this. I should feel as if I were so much better. And don't ask me, please! I can't, I can't get up to put myself in those dusty hideous clothes."

"They are not dusty now," I said, and a faint little sense of difficulty crossed my mind. She was taking everything for granted, as if she belonged to me, and had come on a visit. I think if I had offered to give her my Indian cashmere and all the best things I had, she would not have been surprised.

She made no answer to this. She continued patting and caressing the shawl, laying down her beautiful cheek on her shoulder for the pleasure of feeling it. It was very senseless, very foolish—and yet it was such pretty play that I was more pleased than vexed. I sat down by her, watching her movements. They were so graceful always—nothing harsh or rough or unpleasant to the eye, and all so natural—like the movements of a child.

I don't know how long I sat and watched her—almost as pleased as she was. It was only when time went on, and when I knew I was liable to interruption, that I roused myself up. I tried to lead her into serious conversation. "You look a great deal better," I said, "than I could have hoped to see you last night."

"Better than last night? Indeed, I should think so. Please, don't speak of it. Last night was darkness, and this is light."



"Yes, but—— I fear I must speak of it. I should like to know how you got there, and if some one, perhaps, ought to be written to—some one who may be anxious about you."

"Nobody is anxious about me."

"Indeed, I am sure you must be mistaken," I said. "I am sure you have friends, and then—— I don't want to trouble you, but you must remember I don't know your name."

She threw back the shawl off her shoulders all at once, and sat up erect.

"My name is Mrs. Reinhardt, I told you," she said, "and I hope you don't doubt my word."

It was impossible to look in her face, and say to her, "I don't know anything about you. How can I tell whether your word is to be trusted or not?" This was true, but I could not say it.

I faltered, "You were ill last night, and we were both excited and confused. I wish very much you would tell me now once again. I think you said you would."

"Oh, I suppose I did," she said, throwing the shawl away, and nestling down once more among the pillows. A look of irritation came over her face. "It is so tiresome," she said, "always having to explain. I felt so comfortable just now, as if I had got over that."

There was an aggrieved tone in her voice, and she looked as if, out of her temporary pleasure and comfort, she had been brought back to painful reality in an unkind and uncalled-for way. I felt guilty before her. Her face said plainly, "I was at ease, and all for your satisfaction, for no reason at all, you have driven me back again into trouble." I cannot describe how uncomfortable I felt.

"If I am to be of any use to you," I said, apologetically, "you must see that I ought to know. It is not that I wish to disturb you."

"Everybody says that," she murmured, with an angry pull at the bed-clothes; and then, all at once, in a moment, she brightened up, and met my look with a smile. My relief was immense.

"I am a cross thing," she said; "don't you think so? But it was so nice to be comfortable. I felt as if I should like to forget it all, and be happy. I felt good—— But never mind; you cannot help it. I must go back to all the mud, and dirt, and misery, and tell you everything. Don't look distressed, for it is not your fault."

Every word she said seemed to convince me more and more that it *was* my fault. I could scarcely keep from begging her pardon. How cruel I had been! And yet, and yet—— My head swam, what with the dim consciousness in my mind of the true state of affairs, and the sense of her view of the question, which had impressed itself so strongly upon me since I came into the room. Which was the right view I could not tell for the moment, and bewilderment filled my mind. I could only stare at her, and wait for what she pleased to say.

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